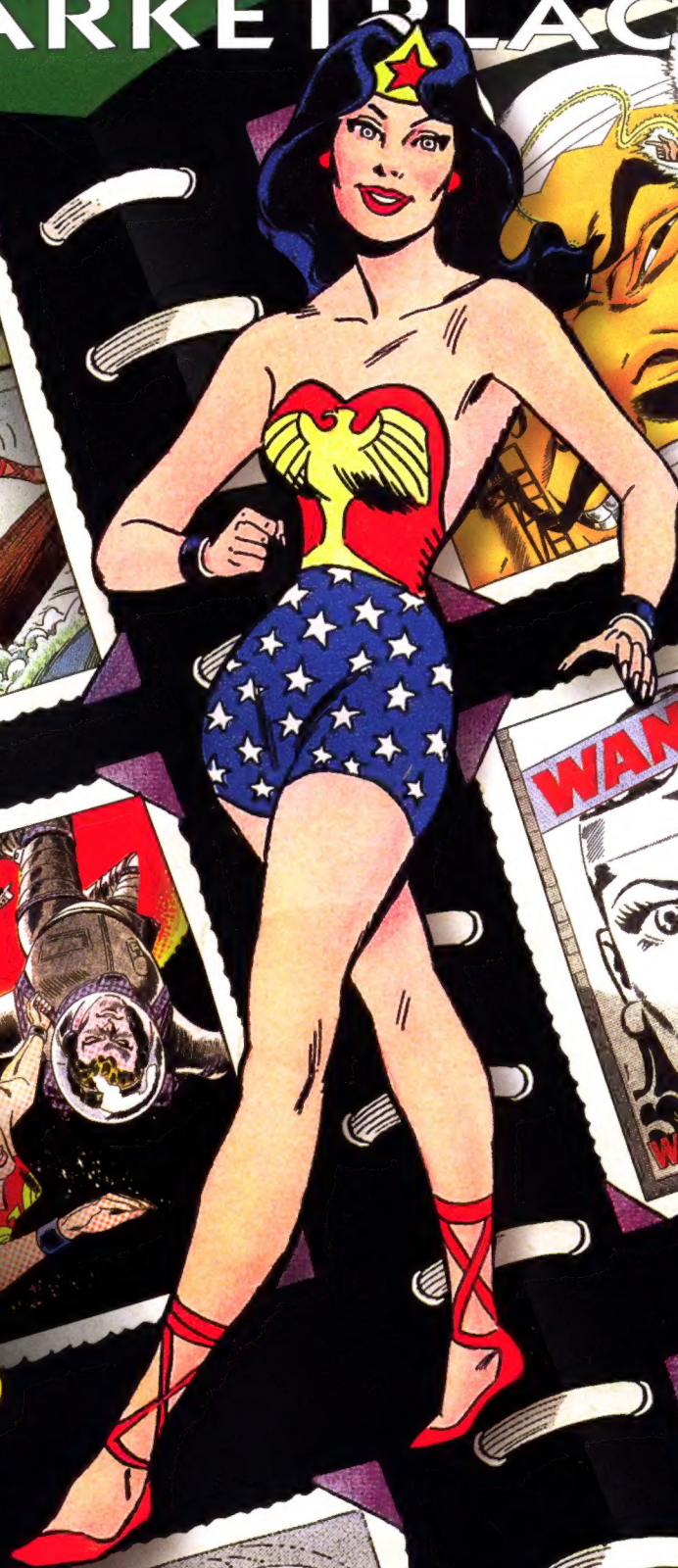
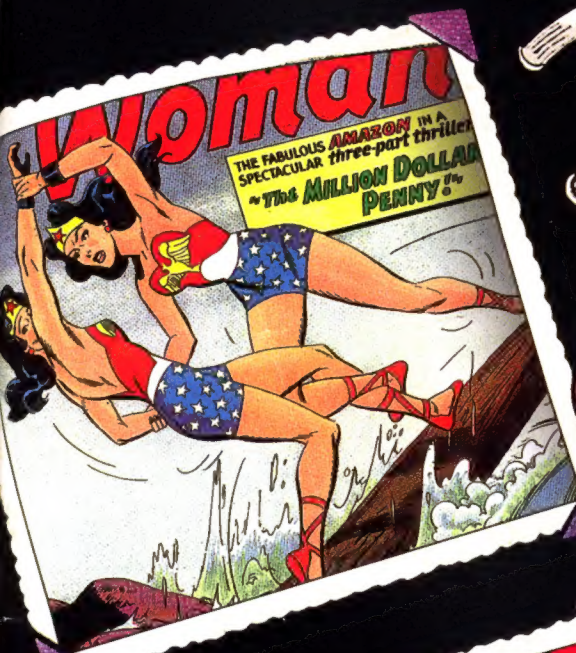


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78 May

NUMBER 2000

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POP CULTURE FOR THE MILLENNIUM!

More money... less comic!

Last month, Jon Berk was kind enough to handle the editor's page during my bout with the flu. My thanks to Jon for pinch-hitting. He mentioned that my topic-in-progress is grading, it is... specifically the recent... and regrettable... movement to loosen up or "soften" grading standards. To illustrate what I mean, allow me to cite just three examples of grade-softening. First was the increased use of "split grades" or "combination grades" (e.g. FN/VF, VF/NM, etc.). Although some use them as a genuine attempt to fine-tune a grade, others use them as a way of "fudging" the grade up one notch... simply to get more money. I'm convinced that in most cases the addition of the "/NM" to a VF book is really just a way of getting the higher nomenclature into the description. And the same holds true for FN/VF as well.



The second thing which "softened" grading standards was the recent adoption of a new numerical equivalency. On the advice of a select group of dealers, the VF/NM grade was placed in the NM tier or range... 9.0-9.7. According to the dealers who participated in the development of the new system, it was placed there to offset dealer fears that "collectors would only want 9.0 or higher books." Placing VF/NM at the bottom of the NM tier is a de facto suggestion that VF/NM is a NM grade. IT IS NOT, yet the new numerical equivalency clearly suggests this. (Accuracy and simple arithmetic logic dictate that if VF/NM (if used at all) should be listed at 8.8 or 8.9... not 9.0!

The third grade-softening event is the recent introduction of "Qualified" grades by CGC, a national grading service. Although I personally have nothing against the grading service or its graders, I feel their use of the qualified grade is confusing. Traditionally, we might describe an otherwise FN book with a water stain on the back cover as "Superguy #46 VG (would be VF except for water stain on bc)" but we still called it a VG book. With the Qualified system the description might be something like this... "Superguy #46 Qualified VF (water stain on bc)." Although veteran collectors will probably not buy into this descriptive approach, less seasoned collectors and/or newcomers

to the hobby could be misled. CGC deserves credit for using "apparent grade" to clearly identify restored books. I personally hope they'll continue their consumer-friendly stance by discontinuing the use of the qualified grade.

After reading the three examples above, you may be asking yourself "why should I care about the softening of the grading system?" Well, here's why. Throughout the history of our hobby, there has been a general trend to tighten grading standards as prices for books rise and the spread between grade-price expands. Stricter and stricter grading standards are good for collectors, because less specimens qualify as extremely high grade and generally collectors can buy comics for less. But if grading standards and grading nomenclature are softened, more comics can be labeled with higher grades... and sellers will "justify" charging higher prices for lesser grade books. In the long run this can cause collectors to lose interest, investors to lose confidence, and our hobby to lose credibility.

My hope is that future-thinking collectors will support stricter grading standards... and resist the pressure to soften them. If we allow grading standards to be softened, we'll all be paying more money for less book!

I hope you'll consider what I've said... and I'm anxious to hear your view on this important topic. May you keep the best interests of our hobby high on your priority list!

Best, Gary

Gary

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Full Service

In CBM #76 you printed a letter from Louis Barnes. Without naming my store or me he took exception to a statement I made in a recent market report. I stated that due to a recent shakedown, my two Lee's Comics stores are now the only full service comics stores left between Mountain View and San Francisco, a stretch of some 40 miles. He went on to praise a different store in the area.

While there are certainly several stores in my area that sell comics, they do not fulfil my definition of a "full service" comics store, which I would define it as follows:

1. A store whose primary focus, and majority of product line, is comics related.
2. A store that carries a full line of comics and graphic novels that they receive directly from Diamond (rather than a sub-distributor) each week.
3. A store that opens and closes at regular hours each day.
4. A store that is clean, well-organized, nicely fixtured, well lit, and professionally staffed.

To be honest, Lee's Comics was not what I

would have called a full service comics store when I first opened in 1982. It took several years of hard work, sacrifice, and dedication to evolve to that level. Full service comics stores make up the vast minority of the approximately 5,000 comic book stores found in America. They account for a very large percentage of total new comics and graphic novel orders, however. Other full service comics stores and I drive the market. If too many of us close, it could be fatal for the industry.

Lee M. Hester, California

Superman Radio Show

Just received my copy and am enjoying it thoroughly. Thanks for taking my "advice" and putting out these special reprint editions rather than including this type of material in the regular issues.

The article on the Superman radio show causes me to write. Your readers should know that tons of those broadcasts are indeed available in long, complete runs, beginning with the very first episode. I myself have hundreds of episodes and since I listened to them originally back in the early 1940s I haven't heard them for quite a while. They may be ordered from my source, at very reasonable prices. Write to Radio Showcase, PO Box 4357, Santa Rosa, CA 95402. You may also visit their website at

http://www.sonic.net/~otrsteve/Radio_Showcase_index.html where you can print out the complete list of available shows. They have excellent copies and excellent service, and their only fault is they can't keep up with my listening needs! Superman is a classic radio show and deserves attention by fandom looking for a real kick. The theater of the mind is a wonderful place to visit!

Thomas H. Miller, Pennsylvania

Take exception

"Duplicitous." It kind of rolls right off the tongue. I have to take exception to Mr. Vadeboncoeur's criticism of my "One Shot Wonders" article. Leaving aside the fact that over the last six years I have regularly, on an irregular basis, focused almost exclusively on more obscure Golden Age. (In fact I call them TOGS—"the other guys.") I try to do so in an entertaining fashion. My opening paragraph and what follows pays homage to these obscure wonders. As to the apparent castigation as to the last line of the article referring to "value," such words were crafted by the editor of the article, not I.

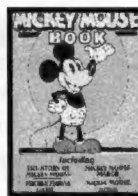
Jon Berk, Connecticut

Space Museum

Though sporadic Space Museum reprints would occur, new tales of the museum and its fascinating exhibits would never appear again." Thus spake Tony Gleeson in his wonderful contribution to CBM #75, "A Visit to the Space Museum." The statement is not entirely correct, however... at least two new Space Museum stories did appear, albeit in unlikely places. And while neither could boast of Gardner Fox's writing, they both proudly carry the name Carmine Infantino above the word penciler.

I will describe the two new Space Museum tales in the order opposite the way in which they appeared, for reasons which will become clear.

The second occurred in Secret Origins #50 (August, 1990, second series). The issue contained six stories, the other five being the origins of Robin, the two Flash system, western hero Johnny Thunder, Dolphin, and Black Canary. In true Space Museum fashion, the other five features were all represented on the cover with the



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Space Museum itself noticeably absent.

The Startling Secret of the Space Museum, a nine-page epic by Gerard Jones, Carmine Infantino, and George Perez (and edited by Mark Waid) opens with a splash panel in the style of the original series of stories. The only thing missing was a comet-shaped blurb declaring it to be A Space Museum Story. In the tale, Howard and Tommy Parker take their monthly stroll to the Space Museum, this time encountering an old footlocker which, Howard informs his son, was the very first Space Museum.

This footlocker, you see, was the property of a young Space-Marine Corporal who loved the history of Space Travel. His treasure trove included the contact lenses from Strange Adventures #104, the toy soldier from Strange Adventures #130, and many other gems (including, literally, the gem from SA #106). When a trio of alien entrepreneurs comes to Earth, the Corporal is the only one who recognizes them as the three Peganan invaders from Strange Adventures #118. (Note Peganians was incorrectly typed in CBM #75, by the way.) Armed with his knowledge of space history, the young Space-Marine is able to use his footlocker full of artifacts to prevent a second Peganan takeover attempt.

The incident made the space-military sit up and take notice of the importance of knowing one's space history. (You know what they say: A planet that does not know its space history is doomed to repeat it.) This led directly to the founding of the Space Museum. And it should come as no surprise to readers of Space Museum stories that in the final two panels the other shoe is dropped: the young Corporal who loved history was (gasp!) Howard Parker! Aside from launching the museum, the event launched his military career.

The other latter-day Space Museum tale occurred in the even less-likely Justice League of America #206 (September 1982). Once again, the cover in no way indicates that a Space Museum story awaits within—even though it's the only story in the book! The book, which was guest-penciled by Infantino, was written by Gerry Conway, inked by Romeo Tanghal, and edited by Len Wein. The story, entitled "The Secret That Time Forgot" features a JLA lineup heavy in characters associated with Infantino (Flash, Elongated Man, new look Batman), but most of the League members up to that time make at least a cameo appearance.

The story opens a little later in the 25th century than most Space Museum stories, with adult Thomas Parker taking his son Gardner for the monthly excursion as his father did before him. This month's exhibit: a replica of the bell, jar, and wheel used by Felix Faust to free the Demons Three way back in JLA #10. Why replicas? Because JLA #147—which takes place in the Legion of Super-Heroes' 30th century—revealed that the JLA satellite exploded in the 21st century, scattering the objects across the universe. They had not yet been found in this, the 25th century. This story does an excellent job of adhering to some confusing continuity—much better than JLA #35 does after the Demons' previous appearance in JLA #11—or Alan Moore's Swamp Thing #50 which doesn't seem to fit into the Demons' continuity at all. But I digress.

In order to better explain the exhibit, Thomas takes Gardner to a never-before seen wing of the museum, The Hall of Justice. In it, Gardner learns all about the Justice League of America who belong in the Space Museum (a) because of their satellite headquarters and (b) for saving Earth many times over.

Thomas explains that the bell, wheel, and jar, artifacts used to free and/or imprison the demons, were originally not transferred from the JLA's Secret Sanctuary to their new satellite. The demons created illusions to trick the League into thinking that they had been moved, but the real artifacts remained in the cave. Years later the Demons were able to manipulate a hiker to retrieve the objects and sell them to a pawnbroker who recognized them for what they were. The Demons were subsequently freed and summarily defeated by the Justice League, who then placed the real artifacts in their satellite trophy room for safekeeping. (Time for the Demons to break free: six pages. Time for Zatanna to defeat them: two panels.)

Little Gardner Parker wants to know one thing: How does Thomas have so much inside information on the details of this case? (Get ready for the patented Space Museum twist.) Simple, son. One of those heroes is an ancestor of yours. Which one? That is left unrevealed. Subsequent readers' letters speculate, but I don't believe enough information is provided to draw any real conclusions.

As far as I am aware, those are the only two post-Strange Adventures Space Museum tales. A purist might consider them apocryphal, but the participation of Infantino and the writers' obvious affection for the material led me to count

them. In these days when writers take beloved characters and turn them into murderers and scoundrels or take past continuities and decide they never happened, it's gratifying to read a revival that remains true to its source.

One final note: I am very thankful for the synopsis of *Strange Adventures* #139. In my (much) younger days I saw a panel from what I assume was this story in (I think) an issue of *Amazing World of DC Comics*. A father was telling his son, that branch is the secret weapon that once saved the Earth! Wow! How I wanted to read that story! It was a teaser that piqued my curiosity but I had no idea where that tale might be found. Thank you for resolving an ancient mystery!

Jack Abramowitz, New York

Love Rocky & Bullwinkle

Just got CBM #76... nice issue! I love Rocky & Bullwinkle, so your cover brought a huge smile to my face.

In response to Jim Vadeboncouer's letter: I think your Carmine Infantino coverage was great! Instead of chastising your mag, he should submit a piece covering the material he feels you're neglecting—Jim's certainly knowledgeable enough to do a great article. I can imagine

how tough it is to produce a mag with the quality of CBM on a monthly basis, and I think you're doing a fabulous job. Keep up the great work!

Best regards,

John Morrow, North Carolina

No one knows better than you, John, how difficult it can be to publish a fanzine... and considering the great job you do with the Jack Kirby Collector, CBA, and your other titles, your words are high praise indeed... and deeply appreciated.

Just nostalgia

Ahem... A Rocky & Bullwinkle issue? I suppose you got gun-shy from all the controversy enveloping the world of prozines these days (if there's one more comic book dust-up, I swear I'll scream. Hey, it's just comics!) but I'm afraid this won't work. Inevitably, you'll get fans hollering "Rocky & Bullwinkle comics are just nostalgia!!! Why, you didn't even give the names of the writers and artists! Carl Barks and Little Lulu were hard enough to swallow, now we get Moose and Squirrel?" Gee. Not as profound and adult as the Green Goblin issues of Spider-Man, to be sure. (I'm poking fun at all of us arrested ado-

lescents here. I'm still trying to get over my obsession with ACG's Magicman myself.)

... With tongue in cheek,

Link Yaco, New York

Murray Ward Addendum

Minor cavil, perhaps, but in CBM #74's Silver Age Green Lantern article by Aaron Manson, he makes the statement that "Two years before the Flash was introduced, the Soviets launched their first intercontinental ballistic missile and the first man-made satellite, Sputnik." The Flash was introduced in 1956; Sputnik was launched in 1957. Maybe he meant "two years before the Flash got his own title" or "two years before Green Lantern was introduced," both of which happened in 1959.

By the way, I ordered *Comic Book Marketplace Special Edition* #1 (just for the Gerber stamps, since I have all the issues reprinted therein) from my dealer months ago and still haven't received it.

Murray Ward, Canada

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Where's Lieber part III?

Love your magazine. I usually read it cover to cover every issue just absorbing the wide and wonderful history of this hobby (one which contains much more than the superhero comics I usually specialize in). I just wanted to say that up front before I started complaining.

I loved parts one and two of the Larry Lieber interview. When I got to the end of part two, I became irritated when I read the following. "Join us on the Web at www.fanuniverse.com for the final part of this exclusive three-part interview." I immediately started grumbling. You mean I have to get up out of bed (where I was reading the CBM issue), turn on my computer, log on, find this webpage, just to read the article? (Part three of an announced "three-part" interview. I don't remember a disclaimer with part one saying that all three parts would not be published in CBM.)

To make matters worse, I logged onto the Internet, went to the above website, and the advertised interview was nowhere to be found. I ended up at a largely out-of-date "Overstreet's Fan Magazine" website. What happened? Will the interview see print somewhere? (The "Spider-Man" and "Incredible Hulk" newspaper strip coverage was especially interesting to me personally.)

So in the future please contain all interviews/articles to the actual print CBM. If you want to reprint articles online, more power to you! Even if you want to do "exclusive" online articles, you can simply advertise them in CBM so that interested parties could find them. However, I find this "let's get them hooked with part one so that they have to find part two elsewhere" unappealing. True, comics publishers have been doing that for years now with their "crossover" stories, but at least they were always within the same comic book format. (The only exception I can think of at the moment was the Star Trek/X-Men comic leading into a Star Trek/X-Men novel from Pocket Books, to which I heard several comic fans also grumbling when it happened.)

As for what I'd like to see in CBM... I think your current coverage is about right where I like it. I am primarily a DC fan, so I don't mind a slight edge in DC coverage from all ages. I collect many Marvels also, so I enjoy Marvel coverage as well. And I appreciate reading about genres I have had little contact with such as horror, western, crime, humor, etc. So as long as you keep printing at least a few really cool DC articles each issue or so, I think you can "do no wrong" in my eyes (aside from the above Internet complaints).

So please keep the CBM issues coming. (The Special reprint issues as well. It's a shame to read that issues #1-21 and Overstreet Quarterly #1-6

are unavailable for reprinting at this time. Since most of the material desired from these issues is text (outside of the wonderful accompanying illustrations) and I'm sure you have copies of these issues on hand for research purposes, couldn't you simply scan the articles and republish them as new Specials? I realize that this must cost a bit more than simply re-using from the original film and plates, but it wouldn't seem outside the realm of possibility. If entire Specials republished in this manner were not cost efficient, how about an occasional "flashback" article in the regular magazine? (They would have to be from pretty far back to avoid people complaining of getting "repeat" articles again however.)

David Young,

DeSoto County High School, Florida

Mystery Trail

Been reading CBM # 76 from cover to cover (as usual). I've been saving the Rocky and Bullwinkle until last but in the mean time I wanted to let your readers know about a great comic attraction in Pagosa Springs, Colorado... it's the Fred Harman Museum. Harman's son is the curator/archivist/host and there are paintings, comic books for sale, drawings, photographs, and memorabilia were everywhere.

On another topic, I know I've been asking about Mystery Trail and its non-appearance, but in the last issue of Danger Trail #5, March/April, 1951, in the yellow DC publications box, the "Trail" part of the title is missing as well as what should be listed to the right in the third column. It's as if someone removed "Trail" (only the word "Danger" is left at the top of the second column) as well as "Mystery Trail" which should have been listed at the top of the third column (right after the Mutt and Jeff listing at the bottom of the second column). Possibly sales of Danger Trail were low so it was canceled as well as Mystery Trail. Only the ashcan indicates a companion to Danger Trail. What a pair that could have been! All I can do is speculate. Were there any stories completed for the first issue? If so, where did they go? Other books? Any answers out there? Good luck.

On to Rocky and Bullwinkle!

Steve Fears, Oklahoma

Thanks to all who took the time to write in this issue! Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters for length and/or content. Send correspondence to: CBM Mail, P.O. Box 180700, Coronado, CA 92178-0700 or E-mail us at cbm@gemstonepub.com

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Adventures Into Terror

By Pat S. Calhoun



Adventures Into Terror was Marvel/Timely/Atlas' fifth fantasy title, and certainly the most overtly named. While *Marvel Tales* could (and did) run the gamut from science fiction to horror to mystery to adult fairy tales, *Adventures Into Terror*—though it featured the same eclectic mix—promised heavy doses of shock and “twisted” endings to yarns driven by gut-wrenching horror. Two of Marvel's early titles in the genre briefly varied from their formula “mix”: *Journey Into Unknown Worlds* started with a science fiction emphasis and *Suspense* celebrated the kinship between it and the radio show that provided inspiration. But by the time Atlas really got rolling, *Adventures Into Terror* was one of a dozen to offer that remarkable Atlas blend—now honed to perfection.

The only other distinction the title “enjoyed” was being one of the two expressly forbidden by the Comics Code Authority, which came into power in late 1954 after the Senate demanded an industry clean up. The words “Terror” and “Horror” were deemed too intense for the youth audience that was all that was left after the Code's restrictions helped decimate the adult readership. *Adventures Into Weird Worlds* also perished;

Atlas may have stopped publishing *Menace* just to show that they embraced the new spirit...

Another charming note about the “genesis” of *Adventures Into Terror* is that it inherited its numbering from an old Timely title (this saved money at the post office) that purveyed a 180-degree opposite mood: *Joker*. The first *Terror* issue was #43, November 1949, and the final one (it went #43, #44, #3...) was #31, July 1954. Let's take a look at three prime examples of this classic pre-Code fantasy-horror title.

Adventures Into Terror #8 (February 1952) contains five satisfying stories. Four-color fantasy needed some time to develop, and by early 1952 Atlas, with Stan Lee as editor and a host of fabulous freelance artists working in a wide variety of styles had forged the distinctive approach—fast-moving and full of irony—that produced a wealth of memorable material. “Enter... the Lizard” takes us to darkest Africa with a mad scientist, his fiancée, and their guide on safari searching for giant lizards. When the scientist sees that his betrothed has fallen for the guide he psychos out and uses the lizard's venom to turn his rival into a giant reptile.... It's not much of a story but still makes amusing reading.

“The Parasite” is a chilling weirdie wherein a jailed crook discovers that his cellmate is possessed by a parasite—a second head that comes out of his chest when he's asleep and tries to talk the other man into murdering his host...

“You Can Only Die Once” is a slightly moralistic morsel about the supernatural sufferings of some suicides, but it doesn't take itself too seriously and thus still yields enjoyment. “The Miracle,” drawn with gusto by Dick Ayers, packs a lot of fun into a two-page quickie about a murderer on the lam who makes a magician give him the power of sorcery; power he will soon pay dearly for...

The last story, “The Ones Who Laugh,” is a masterpiece, with awesome sci-fi art by Joe Sinnott. A pompous university professor wakes up one morning to find that everyone is laughing at him. The paranoia builds nicely and is raised to another level when it's revealed that he is the last human among shape-changing aliens who have been eating people then assuming their forms. Wow!

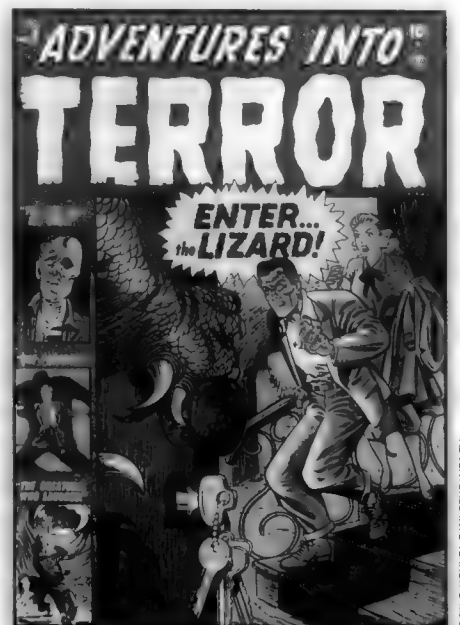
Adventures Into Terror #14 (Winter 1952) definitely shows Atlas hitting their stride. (In fact the Winter issue was packed between #13 December and #15 January. Inside, “The Little

People” starts things off with a troupe of midgets abused by a circus owner who keeps them in virtual slavery, finally rebelling when one of them dies from his violent discipline. The revenge they exact for this crime is nicely realized: Stan Lee and Tony Di Preta produced a solid six-pager.

“The Hands” is, as the cover shows, a story about a man whose arms end in crab claws. Made suicidal by society's rejection of him as a freak he commits robbery and murder to get money for an operation—a desperate and dangerous surgical remedy—only to have the tables turn on him yet again. It's harsh, but hey... Great scratchy Gene Colan art maintains the somber mood that this Kafkaesque fable demands.

“Hex” takes place on a coffee plantation in Brazil where a vicious Yankee overseer works the natives beyond endurance, whipping any who falter, until the native foreman is finally forced to cast a “hex” upon his boss. But even after he falls ill the bully thinks he has one last chance to outwit the “witch doctor”...

“They're Driving Me Crazy” is another effective exercise in paranoia. A chemist reveals to his colleagues that he has created artificial life. The next morning—the day the discovery is to be announced—he bids his family goodbye and heads towards “the Institute” only to find an apartment building where it should be. He asks a



Despite its lackluster cover, *Adv. Into Terror* #8 (Feb 1952) contains five fabulous four-color fantasy stories

ADVENTURES INTO WEIRD WORDS

The "monsters in the graveyard" cover of *Adv. Into Terror* #25 (Nov 1953) features humanoid-headed serpents that look like a nightmare chorus from some ghastly Greek tragedy

beat cop who tells him the Institute exploded four years ago; further research shows that it is believed that he died in the blast. But the capper comes when his colleagues and family don't recognize him. He sees another man's face in the picture frame was his photo was that morning... A mysterious figure appears and greets him by name, talking of trans-dimensional others, and this is the weakest part of the yarn. But the buildup is a superb sequence, enhanced by the Ayers art that combines a fantastical style with visual drive.

Adventures Into Terror #25 (Nov 1953) starts off with a bang: "A Very Grave Matter" is the amazing tale of a coffin maker who sells shoddy wares at top dollar. Business gets so good he decides to have a house built and finds a

supplier who says he'll provide quality material at cut-rate prices... It leads to some fine poetic justice, Atlas style, and the Bill Benulis art is hard-edged moderne with a sure grasp of graphic narration.

"The Terrible Trophy" is at least as good, with lurid art by Matt Fox that's a joy to behold. The Collectors' Club is tired of hearing Rocky Martin brag about his big game hunting, spouting a string of lies about how he assembled his collection of heads and showing off the gorilla-head tattoo on his chest. But the boasting bore brutalizes them into submission until a new member joins, a mild little man who has a bizarre hobby that holds a grisly solution to the problem of Rocky Martin...

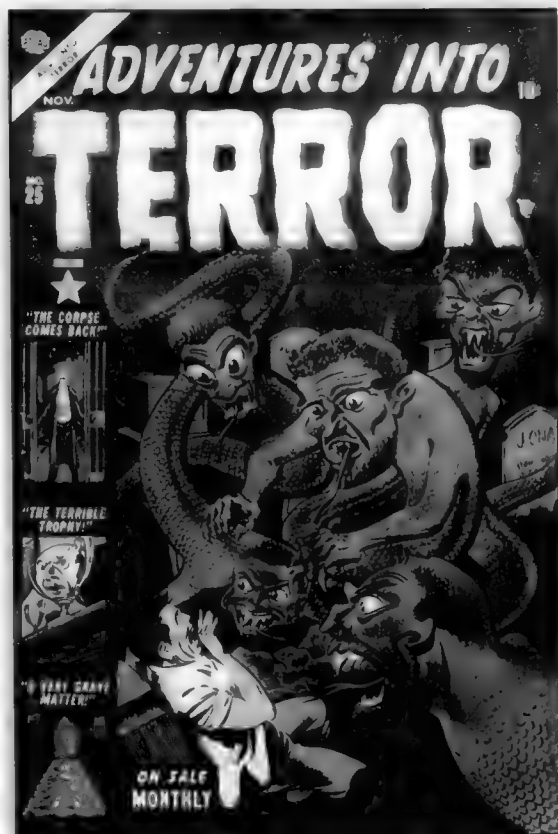
Of the three other yarns only "The Speed-Up" deserves mention, and only because it gets bonus points for being set in the world of comic book creating and publishing. But even with a couple of stinkers thrown in this is an exciting issue on

the strength of those first two terrific stories.

Although it died a martyr's death, *Adventures Into Terror* endures as a testament to the tremendous contribution Atlas made to pre-Code four-color fantasy and horror.

Pat Calhoun is a nationally recognized comic book historian. Originally a Coronadan, Pat and his family now reside in Santa Rosa, California.

Atlas realized early on that the most terrifying cover image is "part-human-part-monster." This special Winter issue (#14) shows how popular the fantasy genre had become by the end of 1952



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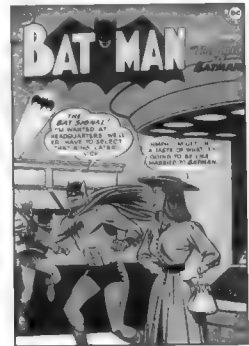
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Queen of the Fawcett Family

Mary Marvel was No. 2 among female crime-fighters

By Michelle Nolan



Anyone who doubts that girls once read comic books by the millions even before the advent of romance comics needs only to check out Fawcett's Mary Marvel. Her story has been well-chronicled over the years, most notably by Trina Robbins in her seminal work *The Great Women Super Heroes* (1996).

However, in looking over my collection of *Mary Marvel Comics* and many of her other stories, I was struck by several oddities and other observations—enough for yet another essay on the most popular teenaged superheroine of all time.

Supergirl, of course, was a marvelous strip, particularly as rendered by Jim Mooney in her early stories after her debut in 1959 in *Action Comics*. But the 1960s were a much different era than Mary Marvel thrived in, and I doubt if Supergirl ever approached Mary Marvel in rela-

tive popularity, even considering that comic books sold considerably better in the 1940s than the 1960s.

Unlike DC's Wonder Woman, who was written for females of all ages as well as whatever boys the company could convince to read her blood-and-thunder adventures, Mary Marvel was clearly marketed to pre-teen girls.

How she was marketed, though, remains an oddity of the Golden Age.

Otto Binder of Captain Marvel fame wrote most of her stories with a gentle blend of whimsy, humor, and a genuine sense of wonder. Some of the best tales of any type during the 1940s for girls can be found in Mary's amusing adventures.

Even though Mary's adventures reportedly did not sell as well as comics of family members Captain Marvel and Captain Marvel Junior, I would still be willing to bet her sales may have surpassed those of Wonder Woman, at least for a while.

As you will see shortly, though, Mary, who was Billy Batson's sister, was treated as something of a commercial step-sister.

Mary, of course, was Fawcett's answer to Wonder Woman who was the first truly commercial successful superheroine. Mary debuted in a Captain Marvel story in *Captain Marvel* #18 (December 1942), drawn by the talented Marc Swayze, exactly one year after Wonder Woman's first appearance (as a backup feature in *All-Star Comics* #8).

Just as Wonder Woman was immediately launched into her own cover-featured monthly strip in an anthology title (*Sensation Comics* #1, January 1942), Mary Marvel was sent directly into her own monthly cover-featured adventures beginning in *Wow Comics* #9 (January 1943). Many of the early *Mary Marvel* covers were strikingly beautiful images by Swayze, rivaling in quality those of Mac Raboy for the covers of *Captain Marvel Junior* and *Master Comics*.

Mary Marvel #13 (Jun 1947) features the six mythological goddesses from which Mary derives her powers

Unlike Wonder Woman and the other two primary members of the Marvel Family, however, it took Mary three years to gain her own title, with *Mary Marvel Comics* #1 (December 1945). In that same month, Mary also began an eight-year run in *Marvel Family* #1.

"Folks, meet Mary Marvel my sister, who will appear in her own magazine every month! Hope you like her!" Captain Marvel is shown shouting on the striking cover of #1, which features several yellow lightning bolts behind the smiling image of Mary.

That may have been Fawcett's plan, but it took half a year before the appearance of both *Mary Marvel* #2 and *Marvel Family* #2 (each dated June 1946). I wonder how many little girls eagerly scanned the newsstands, wondering where the second issue of Mary's adventures could be?

Of course, Mary was still appearing every month in *Wow Comics*. But not for long.

In much the same way that DC's *Green Lantern* title lasted several months beyond the end of his run in *All-American Comics*, Mary Marvel's own title lasted through #28 (September 1948), a full year after her run ended in *Wow Comics* with #58 (September 1947). She was replaced in *Wow* by the teen humor feature Ozzie and Babs, while, oddly, the much lesser-known



costume heroes Phantom Eagle and Commando Yank continued right through the last issue of *Wow* (#69, August 1948). Even the wildly anachronistic Mr. Scarlet and Pinky made it through #64.

But in one of those puzzling oddities of the Golden Age, Mary Marvel continued to appear in *The Marvel Family* title all the way up through the last issue (#89, January 1954). So, other than one oddly placed 13-page story in *Master Comics* #118 (February 1950), Mary's only exposure to comic book readers over a period of more than five years was in *The Marvel Family*.

It was conventional wisdom during this period that the readership of most comic book titles almost completely turned over every three to seven years. And it is true that once a youngster hit his or her teen years, it was often a social disaster to be seen with a comic book—or at least a comic book featuring the

likes of Mary Marvel.

Even so, I've often wondered how many comic book readers of the early 1950s may have wondered why Mary Marvel did not have her own title when the two male members of the family were not only featured in *The Marvel Family* along with Mary, but in their own titles and as the leading figures in anthology titles as well.

I can just picture an inquisitive 10-year-old girl in 1952 saying to herself: "I sure wish they'd give Mary her own title!" All the while not knowing that Mary did, indeed, once appear with the same frequency of Billy Batson and Freddy Freeman.

It's my feeling that Mary Marvel was marketed primarily to younger girls who read

comics. As a result, her own title was treated much differently than most such Golden Age titles of the period.

The first four issues of both *Mary Marvel* and *The Marvel Family* were only 36 pages apiece (including the covers), although perhaps a lack of paper had something to do with this (some publishers were still feeling the squeeze even after WWII ended). At any rate, Fawcett varied the size of its comics more than any other major publisher, sometimes going from 52 to 36 to 52 to 36 pages in a four-issue sequence until finally abandoning the 52-page size for good in the early 1950s at about the same time that most other publishers did.

What was strange about *Mary Marvel*, though, was that the title returned to 36 pages for good after a six-issue fling with the 52-page size in #5-10. Yet her title's frequency remained

monthly right up to the last issue—truly an oddity for comics of that period.

Perhaps Fawcett's book-keeping methods were different, but it seems strange that a monthly title would be cancelled so abruptly, particularly when all of the other five titles featuring the Marvel characters kept right on going into 1953—*Captain Marvel*, *Captain Marvel Junior*, *Whiz*, *Master*, and *The Marvel Family*.

Regardless of how well *Mary Marvel* was selling—or wasn't selling—Fawcett apparently felt there was no room for her title in the comic book market of the late 1940s.

Wonder Woman, of course, was without question the most famous heroine of the Golden Age and, indeed, in all of comics history. She is among the few female fantasy characters to achieve icon status—I would say the vast majority of Americans have heard of Wonder Woman even if they never read comics.

Mary Marvel, though, is a clear No. 2, having appeared in at least 286 stories! These appeared in *Wow Comics* #9-58, all the issues of *The Marvel Family* and *Mary Marvel*, along with *Captain Marvel* #18, 19, and 37, and *Master* #118. Mike Benton's fine "Super Heroes of the Golden Age" also lists Mary appearing in *Captain Marvel* #43, 65, and 69, but I don't have those issues and so I'm not sure of the extent of her participation in these three.

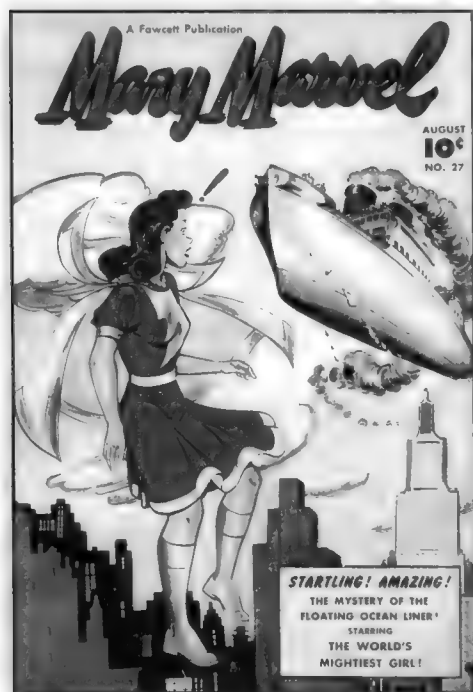
In fact, during the entire period of pre-Comics Code history (1933-54), the only other costumed heroine to appear in more than 20 issues of her own title was Harvey's Black Cat, who ran in #1-29 (1946-51) and again in #54-56 (1955). Black Cat, a non-super powered female version of Batman, also appeared in other Harvey titles during the 1940s, but to nowhere near the extent that Mary Marvel did.

Another reason I believe Mary was marketed to very young readers was that her own title not only contained an exceptionally high number of advertising pages for a 36-page comic, but her stories were consistently among the shortest of any leading Golden Age character for comics of that era.

In many issues of *Mary Marvel* from #13-28, her stories were only five to seven pages long! The total amount of pages devoted to her comic strip was usually no more than 17 or 19. I can only theorize it was because Fawcett felt that the length of Mary's stories didn't really matter to younger readers.

The vast majority of Fawcett's stories were written and drawn in such a whimsical fashion that collectors today tend either to cherish them or not to care for them at all. It takes more than a "willing suspension of disbelief" to read them.

Even so, they're an awful lot of fun. For example, in the very first story in *Mary Marvel* #1, she meets Sivana, the world's wickedest villain, for the first time (as duly noted in a caption in a rare attempt at Golden Age continuity). The first thing she says while foiling Sivana's attempt to shoot a policeman is "Are you that weasel, Sivana, that I've heard so much about? Pleased to meet you! Captain Marvel said if I



The world's mightiest girl solves the mystery of the floating ocean liner in *Mary Marvel* #27 (Aug 1948). On this cover, Mary Marvel's face is rendered in a style that is elongated... radically different from her usual appearance

Mary Marvel Stories in Mary Marvel #1-28

#1 (Dec 1945) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel Meets Sivana" 6 pgs
 "Mary Marvel Meets Sivana's Daughter—Georgia" 7 pgs
 "Trouble for Teacher" 7 pgs
 "The Growth Epidemic" 7 pgs

#2 (Jun 1946) 36 pgs

"The Magic Yarn" 7 pgs
 "The Mississippi Murders" 7 pgs
 "Curse of the Books" 7 pgs
 "The Mad Poet" 6 pgs

#3 (Jul 1946) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel vs. the Color King" 7 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Ghost Games" 7 pgs
 "Entombed" 7 pgs
 "The Swinging Crooners" 6 pgs

#4 (Aug 1946) 36 pgs

"Leave of Absence" 8 pgs
 "Beauty and the Beast" 7 pgs
 "Mary Marvel Meets the Kindest Man in the World" 5 pgs
 "The Slap-Happy Seals" 7 pgs

#5 (Sep 1946) 52 pgs

Titles unavailable; stories are 10, 8, 8, and 10 pgs
 First 52 pager

#6 (Oct 1946) 52 pgs

"Mary Marvel Solves the Box Riddle" 8 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Kiss Craze" 7 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Animal Crooks" 7 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Kid Gang" 7 pgs
 "The Flying Carpet" 8 pgs

#7 (Nov 1946) 52 pgs

"Mary Marvel in the Kingdom Undersea" 11 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Cross Country Bike Race" 9 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Big Test" 9 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Poor Little Rich Girl" 8 pgs

#8 (Dec 1946) 52 pgs

Titles unavailable; stories are 11, 9, 7, and 9 pgs, including a rare Fawcett crossover story with Bulletgirl from the Bulletman strip in Master Comics

#9 (Feb 1947) 52 pgs

"Mary Marvel and the Trojan Horse Mystery" 10 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Glorious Beggar" 9 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and Her Wacky Weed-End" 9 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and Her Thrilling Birthday Party" 9 pgs (w/ Uncle Marvel)

#10 (Mar 1947) 52 pgs

"Mary Marvel and the Man Who Talks to Animals" 8 pgs
 "Freckles' Jackpot" 7 pgs
 "Reversed Impulses" 7 pgs
 "Mary Marvel Meets Dr. Whirro" 7 pgs
 "The Birdmobile" 7 pgs
 Last 52 pager

#11 (Apr 1947) 36 pgs

"The Golden City" 8 pgs
 "Slap Happy Hour" 6 pgs
 "The Sad Dryads" 9 pgs

#12 (May 1947) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel and Georgia Sivana's Green-Ray Gun" 8 pgs
 "Mary Marvel Meets the Beehive People" 7 pgs
 "The Ship Without a Port" 7 pgs

#13 (Jun 1947) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel Keeps the Home

Fires Burning" 8 pgs
 "Freckles' Day" 5 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Courageous Coward" 5 pgs

#14 (Jul 1947) 36 pgs

Titles unavailable; stories are 6, 5, and 7 pgs

#15 (Aug 1947) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel and the Magic Seeds" 9 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Dangerous Deliveries" 7 pgs

#16 (Sep 1947) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel in the Juke Box Menace" 8 pgs
 "The Youth Pills" 9 pgs

#17 (Oct 1947) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel and the Dog-Nappers" 8 pgs (w/ Uncle Marvel)
 "Mary Marvel and Aunt Agatha's Secret" 9 pgs

#18 (Nov 1947) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel and the Talking Sea Serpent!" 9 pgs
 "Mary Marvel in Antics of a Pet Shop!" 5 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Tropical Snow!" 6 pgs

#19 (Dec 1947) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel in the Mountain Mystery!" 6 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Good Will Court" 5 pgs
 "Mary Marvel in the Enchanted Forest!" 6 pgs

#20 (Jan 1948) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel and the Sinister Twins" 6 pgs
 "Sleigh Fun" 5 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Evil Bottles" 6 pgs

#21 (Feb 1948) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel vs. Dicehead—Part I, The Watery Grave" 6 pgs

"Part II, Death Decoy" 5 pgs
 "The Comedy of Errors" 6 pgs

#22 (Mar 1948) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel and the Silver Slippers—Part I, Treachery Afoot" 6 pgs
 "Part II, Treasure of Surprises" 5 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Year-Round Santa" 6 pgs

#23 (Apr 1948) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel and the Double Moon" 6 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Dancing Furniture" 5 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Mad Huntress" 6 pgs

#24 (May 1948) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel vs. Nightowl—Part I, Evil in the Night" 6 pgs
 "Part II, Fate's Choice" 5 pgs
 "Beginner's Luck" 5 pgs

#25 (Jun 1948) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel and the Flying Shoes" 6 pgs
 "Checkmate" 6 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Crime Wave!" 6 pgs

#26 (Jul 1948) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel and the Atomic Panic" 6 pgs
 "A Knitted Adventure" 5 pgs
 "Mary Marvel Says It With Flowers" 6 pgs

#27 (August 1948) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel and Master Gadget" 6 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the House That Jack Built" 5 pgs
 "Mary Marvel and the Floating Liner" 6 pgs

#28 (Sep 1948) 36 pgs

"Mary Marvel vs. The Hen—Part I, The Coiffure of Death" 6 pgs
 "Part II, Churning Death" 5 pgs
 "Uncle Marvel's Powers" 9 pgs

ever met you to hit first and ask questions later!"

Mary meets Sivana's daughter, Georgia Sivana, in the next story in #1, setting in motion a rivalry that lasted through numerous strange adventures.

I especially treasure my copy of *Mary Marvel* #2 (June 1946), because it came from the files of Otto Binder and is signed by him. I bought it from Phil Seuling on a visit to Brooklyn more than 30 years ago, when the late New York Comic Book King was selling Binder's file copies. At the time I bought it, *Mary Marvel* #2 was 21 years old—and it seemed like a wonderfully old comic!

Indeed, comic collectors during the 1960s, regardless of whether they were teenagers or middle-aged folks reliving their youth, thought of comics from the 1930s and '40s as old in a way that today's collectors can never think of comics from the 1960s and '70s. There are simply too many comics remaining from the last 40 years, albeit not always in prime condition.

I still haven't been able to find three issues of *Mary Marvel* to complete my collection of all 28 issues—#5, 8 and 14—so I can't write about the only crossover appearance of Bulletgirl in *Mary Marvel* #8.

I did notice a real oddity in #9 though. Although it may have been a house ad that ran in all Fawcett comics. In this plug for *Mechanix Illustrated*, Captain Marvel yells, "Look, fellows!" in a comic book marketed primarily to girls.

Mary enjoyed several adventures with her self-appointed cousin, Freckles, who fashioned her own *Mary Marvel* dress and fancied herself as an aide to Mary in stories designed for very young girls indeed.

Mary occasionally did something I know of no other costumed heroine doing—she peddled dresses and other clothes in one-page advertisements!

For example, in *Mary Marvel* #1 (April 1947), \$2.98 sent to Mary Marvel Enterprises in New York would get the reader a most pretty Easter frock. There was no *Mary Marvel* emblem anywhere on the dress, though, so I imagine some enterprising company paid a pretty penny to have Mary plug its dresses!

The covers on the *Mary Marvel* series (some of which have been reported to have been taken from Marc Swayze's designs) varied in quality from superb to awful, as you can see if you look at all 28 issues in the *Gerber Photo-Journal*. The Swayze images, of course, were the superb ones.

Speaking of the *Photo-Journal*, here's a great example of how confusing the scarcity index can get, at least from my standpoint. Most of *Mary Marvel* #1-28 are rated either 4s or 5s, but #6, 19, 23, and 27 are given 6s (50 to 200 copies exist). However, the three issues I still need are not rated as especially scarce—#5 is a 5, #8 is a 4, and #14 is the only 3 in the list of the 28 issues! I can surely guarantee that #14 is hardly a 3!

Obviously, had I ever seen any of these three issues if GD or VG condition (that is, affordable for me), I would have snapped them up, just as I have eagerly obtained the other *Mary Marvel* numbers whenever I could find them at a reasonable price. However, I have rarely seen the three I still need—in any condition. And the one that the *Photo-Journal* lists as the most common (#14) I can't ever remember seeing at all! And I have gone through an awful lot of *Mary Marvel* issues at more than 200 comic conventions and dozens of comic book stores in the past three decades!

For what it's worth, I do agree that #27 is the scarcest of the run. My other nomination is #24 (of the issues I have).

Another oddity involving the *Mary Marvel* series is that beginning with #21, she met a series of bizarre Dick Tracy-style villains in stories with a much grimmer twist than earlier in the series. In some ways, these foreshadowed the many horror stories involving the Marvel trio during the 1951-53 period.

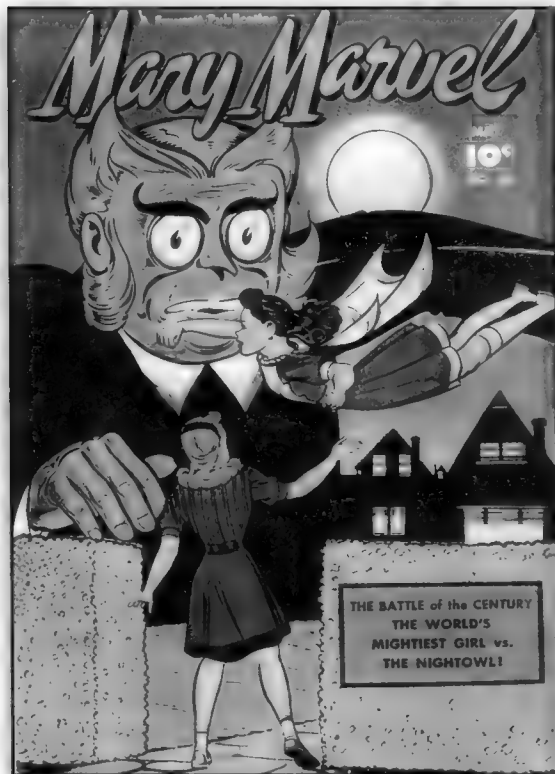
These villains include Dicehead in #21, The Mad Huntress in #23, Nightowl in #24, and The Hen in #28. However, #20, 25 and 26 all featured typically wacky cover situations involving Freckles, giving the series a strange inconsistency of mood.

In addition, unlike many other Fawcett comics of the period, the *Mary Marvel* series never listed any of the company's other titles on the first page, or carried an index page after issue #9.

Until next time, keep on saying "Shazam!" You never know when it might work....

Mary Marvel #2 (Jun 1946) was originally intended to have a January cover date... as evidenced by the reference to "The New Year"

Almost a horror story, "Mary Marvel vs. Nightowl" in *Mary Marvel* #24 (May 1948) seemed out of place in a title specifically written for pre-teen girls



Impossible Wonders!

By John Wells



Egg Fu

Wonder Woman villain, Egg Fu, achieved a degree of immortality when Mary Richards and Sue Ann Nivens (Betty White) described the character (including a mention of Steve Trevor) on the March 8, 1975 episode of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* ("Anyone Who Hates Kids and Dogs").

All-Star Comics #57. Showcase #4. For someone like the Flash, the answer to the question is easy. Where did Earth-Two end and Earth-One begin? Now direct that query towards Superman.

Or Batman. Aquaman. Green Arrow. Setting a dividing point for characters who were continually published from the 1940s into the 1960s is bound to start an argument. Except for Wonder Woman.

When *Wonder Woman* #98 hit the stands, Robert Kanigher was behind the typewriter as he had been for nearly a decade. Visually, though, everything had changed. The stiff, old-fashioned rendering of Harry G. Peter had been replaced by a sleek, modern look. Now illustrated by the team of Ross Andru and Mike Esposito, the Amazing

Amazon took her first tentative steps on the soil of Earth-One.

Taking advantage of the new look, Kanigher virtually relaunched the series, recounting the origin in #98 and offering a new spin on the creation of the Diana Prince alter-ego in #99. The development was evidently effective enough to prompt Kanigher to try it again a year later with Johnny Thunder, who shifted to Earth-One in *All-Star Western* #108's revised backstory.

Kanigher had been tweaking Wonder Woman's origin for years, notably in a 1950's series (*WW* #62, 72, 75, and 80) that purported to explain how the Amazing Amazon acquired her crime-fighting paraphernalia. These episodes, which fit into neither Earth-One or Earth-Two history, have been isolated on a world I've designated "Earth-40," home to Golden Age stories that don't quite fit elsewhere.

The new origin notwithstanding, Kanigher would continue to tinker with history only a year

later when he introduced a new series featuring Princess Diana as a teenager (*WW* #105). Although the concept had been tested in a pair of stories in 1947 and 1948, Kanigher's addition of the Wonder Girl name (and, two issues later, a variation on the familiar red, white, and blue costume) made the character click. Inevitably, Wonder Girl was followed with her own younger persona, finally christened Wonder Tot in *WW* #122.

Within months, the first "Impossible Tale" appeared (*WW* #124), depicting a team-up of Wonder Woman, Wonder Girl, and Wonder Tot. Eventually, the fantasy adventures had proliferated to such a point that the stories stopped carrying disclaimers! This, in turn, led to the famous conclusion of George Kashdan and Bob Haney that Wonder Girl was a protégé of Wonder Woman and, thus, eligible to join the fledgling Teen Titans in 1965. Decades later, Mark Waid would confirm in the second issue of *The Kingdom* lim-



DC COMICS INC., 1979

ALL CHARACTERS & ART © 2000 DC

Two of Ross Andru's more obscure credits are these mini-comics, "The Cheetah's Jewel Caper" (1979 Fruity Pebbles premium) and "The Angle Menace" (1980 Super Sugar Crisp premium). The former features an Andru/Giordano cover and interiors by Ric Estrada and Vince Colletta while the latter is all Andru (with inks by Bob Smith).



THE DC REGISTRY

ited series that the Wonder Family did, in fact, exist on a world other than Earth-One. I've cited it here as "Earth-124."

A second Wonder Tot eventually appeared, as well, this one part of a toddler team known as the Super-Juniors. Although at least three episodes appeared in Europe, only the pilot ever saw print in the United States in the pages of *The Best of DC* #58 (1984).

Just as the "new" Wonder Girl made her debut in *Brave & Bold*, Kanigher decided to junk the old one and all of the other symbols of the extended Wonder Family. After testing the waters with a faux Golden Age story (*WW* #156), he took the plunge with *Wonder Woman* #159, launching several months of stories set during WWII but not reconcilable with the stories that had actually been published then. Welcome back to Earth-40.

Andru and Esposito affected an H.G. Peter style for a few issues but, in the face of fan criticism,

A set of toys any collector would covet. Bob Kanigher's all-stars, as illustrated by Andru and Esposito, from *Metal Men* #16 (1965).

abandoned it with *WW* #165, a few issues before the experiment had run its course. A year later, Andru left the series (*WW* #171), followed soon after by Kanigher and Esposito (*WW* #176). Within a few issues, the *Wonder Woman* series would be turned on its ear, with the Amazing Amazon's costume and powers abandoned and the newly "mod" Diana Prince pushed to the forefront.

Wonder Woman's Silver Age has never quite been forgotten, though. Kanigher recalled elements of his origin retrospective in issue *WW* #204 (1972) and rewrote *WW* #23's first Wonder Girl story in #209 (1973). Even as Diana was killed in 1985's *Crisis On Infinite Earths* #12, we saw her regress first to Wonder Girl and then Wonder Tot before being reduced to the clay she sprang from. John Byrne's period on the strip in the 1990s included *Wonder Woman Annual* #6 (1997), an extended flashback in which the teenaged Diana was depicted in a very familiar red, gold and blue outfit.

The pre-Diana Prince years are commemorated in the following checklists, which record all the appearances of the Earth-One Wonder Woman (and her multiple offshoots) from 1958 to 1968:

Wonder Woman (Diana a.k.a. Diana Prince; Earth-One):

Action Comics #365
Aquaman (1) #18, 30
Atom #8
Brave & Bold (1) #28-30, 60, 63, 78
Doom Patrol (1) #104
Flash (1) #175
Green Lantern (2) #29
JLA #1-31, 33-36, 38, 40-41, 43-45, 50, 52-54, 57, 59-61, 63, 65-66
Metal Men (1) #21
Mystery In Space #75
Showcase #59
Superman (1) #199
Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane #74
Teen Titans (1) #1
Wonder Woman (1) #98-128, 130-132, 134, 136-137, 139, 141-144, 146, 148, 156-158, 166, 167/2, 168/2, 169, 170/2, 171-179

Wonder Woman (Earth-124):

Wonder Woman (1) #124, 128-129, 133, 135, 138, 140, 142, 144-145, 147, 149-155

Wonder Woman (Earth-40):

The Legend of Wonder Woman #1-4

Wonder Woman (1) #50/1-2, 62/3, 72/3, 75/1, 80/2, 156, 159-165, 167/1, 168/1, 170/1

Wonder Woman (variants):

Detective Comics #347
JLA #16
Metal Men (1) #16
Superman (1) #149, 192
Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane #82
WW (1) #117, 146, 172

"Wonder Girl" I (Diana; Earth-Two):

Wonder Woman (1) #23, 30

Wonder Girl I (Earth-One):

Wonder Woman (1) #105-107, 112, 120-121, 123, 209

Wonder Girl I (Earth-124):

Wonder Woman (1) #124, 128-129, 133, 135, 138, 140, 142, 144-145, 147, 149-155

"Wonder Girl" I (current):

Aquaman Annual #1
Wonder Woman (2) #134-135
Wonder Woman Annual #6
Wonder Woman Secret Files #1

Wonder Girl I (variant):

Wonder Woman (1) #158



Wonder Tot (Diana; Earth-One):

Wonder Woman (1) #105, 113, 122-123, 126

Wonder Tot (Earth-124):

Wonder Woman (1) #124, 128-129, 133, 135, 138, 140, 142, 144-145, 147, 149-155

Wonder Tot (variants):

Ambush Bug #3

Wonder Woman (1) #158

SUPPORTING PLAYERS:

Perhaps no character was more affected by the new blood than Queen Hippolyta. Her name had been altered from Hippolyte in 1953 (*WW* #57) but Andru and Esposito brought with them a more striking change. Wonder Woman's brunette mother had become a blonde!

A few other Amazons also made recurring appearances during the Andru-Esposito years, notably Paula, whose origins as the Baroness von Gunther had been long forgotten (or so it seemed). Professor Alpha, seen in H.G. Peter's final issue (#97) returned in #100. Photographer Tara (*WW* #103) returned as a walk-on in #106.

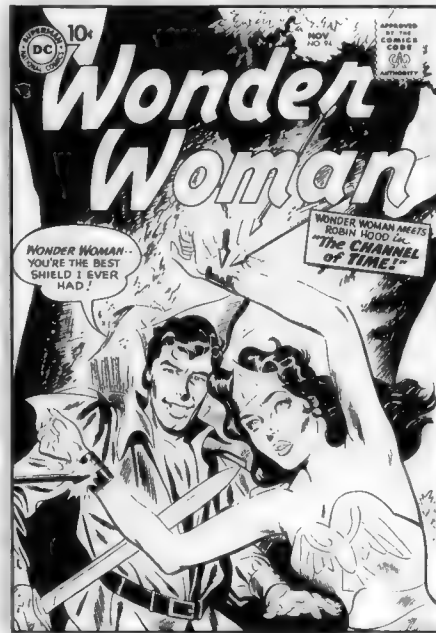
Mer-Man shared his name with two earlier DC characters, a villain who fought Jay Garrick in *Flash Comics* #58 and a hero glimpsed in *My Greatest Adventure* #10. John Byrne made a nod to Mer-Boy's continued place in current Wonder Woman continuity as did Peter David, who substituted a young Aquaman for Ronno in a flashback in 1995's *Aquaman Annual* #1. The young Diana's first meeting with a man, years before Steve Trevor, was greeted by some as a breach of the series' canon, a reaction that most likely never occurred to the kids reading *Wonder Woman* in the early 1960s.

Almost exactly a decade after their last appearance in 1950's *Wonder Woman* #44, Etta Candy and the Holliday Girls made a short-lived return to the series. Etta would again become a regular during the 1976-1978 WWII flashback (#229-243) but her Earth-One persona, now a graduate of Holliday College, had to wait until 1980's issue #272 before reuniting with Diana.

Also returning after a long absence was nurse Diana Prince, who sold her identity to the Amazon Princess for money to join her fiancé in South America. In the original account, the real Diana eventually married Dan White and had a child. In the Earth-40 version, her fiancé was named Bill and was saved from death only by the intervention of Wonder Woman.

And Steve Trevor? The man often dismissed as "a male Lois Lane" had little time to reflect on his angel's transformation into a fashion-conscious adventurer. He was gunned down by the forces of Doctor Cyber in *Wonder Woman* #180. The story of his eventual return is best left for another time.

For now, enjoy these Silver Age appearances (and selected earlier and more recent ones) of the major players of Wonder Woman:



Andru and Esposito's debut on the cover of *Wonder Woman* #94. "Ross didn't want to touch Wonder Woman," Esposito recalled in 1977's *The Amazing World of DC Comics* #15. "He didn't think he could draw pretty girls."

The Amazons (Earth-One):

JLA #9

Wonder Woman (1) #98, 103, 105-107, 109, 112-115, 117-121, 123, 125-126, 130-134, 137, 143-145, 149, 152-155, 168, 170-171, 173-175, 179

The Amazons (Earth-124):

Wonder Woman (1) #128, 133, 135, 142, 145, 149, 151-155

The Amazons (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #156, 159

The Amazons (variants):

Wonder Woman (1) #158

Bird-Boy (Wingo; also see Bird-Man):

Wonder Woman (1) #144, 147, 149-153

Bird-Boy (variant):

Wonder Woman (1) #158

Bird-Man (Wingo; also see Bird-Boy):

Wonder Woman (1) #151 (mention), 154-155

Bird-Man (variant):

Wonder Woman (1) #158

Etta Candy (Earth-One):

Wonder Woman (1) #117, 119, 121, 127

Etta Candy (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #156

General Darnell (Earth-One):

Wonder Woman (1) #99, 101, 108, 110, 114, 122, 157, 166, 169, 179

General Darnell (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #50, 161, 163-164, 170

Hippolyta (Earth-One):

The Brave & The Bold (1) #60
Justice League of America #9
Showcase #59

Teen Titans (1) #1

Wonder Woman (1) #98, 100, 105-107, 109, 112-113, 115-121, 123, 126, 130-132, 134, 143-144, 157-158, 168, 170-175, 179

Hippolyta (Earth-124):

Wonder Woman (1) #124, 128-129, 133, 135, 138, 140, 142, 144-145, 147, 149-155

Hippolyte (Earth-40):

The Legend of Wonder Woman #3
Wonder Woman (1) #156, 159

Hippolyta (variants):

Wonder Woman (1) #158

The Holliday Girls (Earth-One; with Lita Little, Thelma Tall and Tina Toy):

Wonder Woman (1) #117, 119, 121, 127

The Holliday Girls (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #156, 168

Mer-Boy (Ronno a.k.a. Manno; Earth-One; also see Mer-Man III: E1):

Wonder Woman (1) #107, 111 (as "Renno"), 112, 114-116, 119-122, 134

Mer-Boy (Earth-124; also see Mer-Man III: E124):

Wonder Woman (1) #124, 129, 135, 138, 140, 144-145, 147, 149-150, 152-153

"Mer-Boy" (current):

Wonder Woman (2) #135

Mer-Boy (variant):

Wonder Woman (1) #158

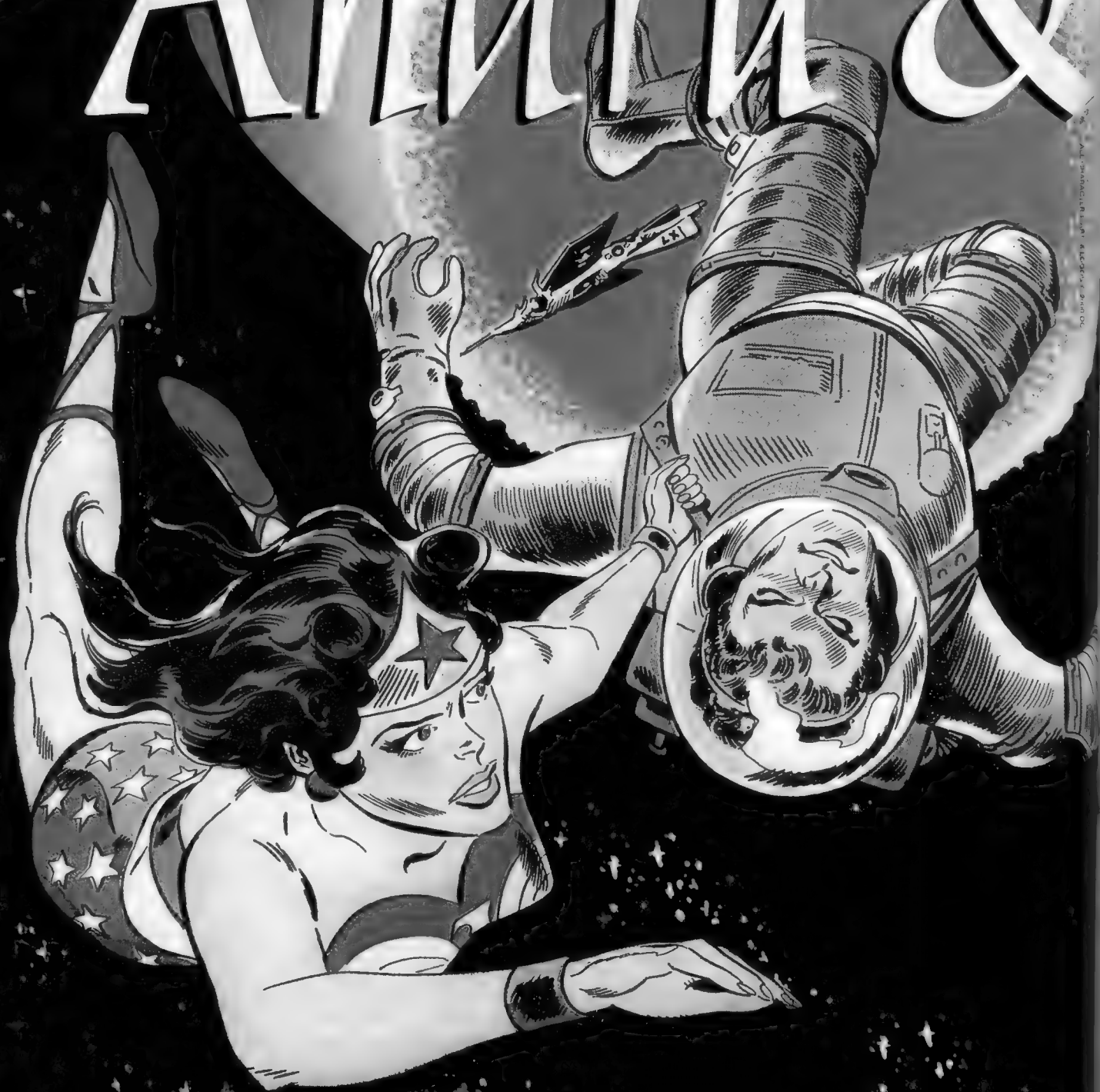
Mer-Man III (Manno a.k.a. Ronno;**Earth-One; also see Mer-Boy: E1):**

Wonder Woman (1) #118, 125, 131-132, 144

Mer-Man III (Earth-124; also see Mer-Boy: E124):

(Continued on page 76)

OF ROBOTS, AMAZONS & ANDY &



DINOSAURS...

Esposito

BY
WILL MURRAY

A

few years back I had the privilege to moderate a panel with Ross Andru and Mike Esposito. Having been a fan of their work since the day *Showcase* #37, the first Metal Men tryout, came out in 1962, I really looked forward to it. Here it was 30 years later and I was finally getting a chance to meet with them both.

My anticipation turned to partial sadness when on the day of the convention I learned Ross Andru could not make it owing to family illness. So Mike Esposito became, for that moment anyway, sole spokesman for the duo. By reputation, Esposito was the more garrulous of the pair. In fact, during their early career, Andru seldom went to see editors. He left that to his partner, Mike.

But I still wanted to hear Andru's side of their long collaboration. At a subsequent convention, I made Andru's acquaintance, and mentioned that I'd like to interview him for print. Before I could act, however, he passed away in November, 1993, at the age of 67. The opportunity was lost forever.

Fortunately, I did make a tape of the Andru and Esposito panel. While it tells only one side of the story, by combining it with quotes culled from past interviews with the pair, notably from *Amazing World of DC Comics* #15 and *Comics Spectacular*, it's still possible to present the story of Andru and Esposito in their own words.

One of the surprises of the 1992 panel occurred just before it opened. Joe Simon walked in, looking for me. I introduced him to Mike Esposito. While I don't recall if those two giants had ever met before, I do remember Mike was very pleased to meet one half of one of the other great art teams in comics, and paid Joe a great compliment. He and Ross were inspired, he told us, to team up because of the example set by Simon and Kirby.

With that minor bombshell still ringing in my ears, I started the panel. Mike began expanding on the story.

"We were really crazy about their work and said, 'Look, there's two guys that get along and can do penciling and inking.' Ross and I went to art school together. Thirteen years old, music and art, high school. We published together. We did everything but date together. Ross and I were together from day one when he started comics. He wanted to pencil. He didn't know anything about inking, and I never inked."



Andru & Esposito

Ironically, while Andru the penciller is considered the creative genius of the team, he got off to a slow start compared to Esposito. When Andru first showed Esposito his work—they were still in high school—his future inker was not impressed. "His stuff was bad...very crude and heavy-handed. I felt sorry for him."

But Andru made up in drive what he lacked in polish. Both men began studying art under Burne Hogarth.

"We were both students of Burne Hogarth at the School of Visual Arts," Esposito explains. "He went to Ross and said, 'How would you like to pencil my Sunday page—just the layout?' And Ross, boy, Ross came to me one day. He said he was doing the *Tarzan* strip for the *Daily Mirror*!"

Andru found working as Hogarth's assistant a challenge. "When I was doing a thing with Hogarth, towards the end, he had to deal with a situation where someone else was to script it.

So they got some writer from I don't know where, who started doing a character called 'Oh No Nos,' and they were literally meatballs! They were huge, about three feet in diameter, and they had a face in their body, and they had hands protruding. Well, what are you going to do with a thing like that? It's absurd. You're locked into it. No matter what you do, you're going to go wrong."

Meanwhile, Esposito had found work at Fox and Timely comics, as a penciller. Ironically, he did no inking in those days, in fact, he hated inking! This was 1949.

At Timely, Esposito drew a range of genres... horror, war, love, and western titles. When Hogarth dropped the *Tarzan* strip, Andru was forced to look for work, and the duo reconnected professionally.

Esposito recalls: "Ross came to me and said, 'Look, I got a chance

to draw for Hillman Publications, but I can't finish it. Can you do it?' I said, 'Ross, I never inked.' It was a race car story. We took a chance and it worked. Being buddies since we were in school, it was a handshake—a partnership that lasted for years and years and years until he left Marvel to go to DC about 1977. So we worked as a team for years.

"We had no bylines in the beginning," Esposito adds. "Then finally we got bylines as Andru and Esposito. In fact everything we ever did, it was always Art By, never Delineated By. I once had an argument with one of the editors of Marvel. I said, 'What is



this you're giving me with delineated, inked, and then the penciller is the artist? When Leopold Stokowski tells the orchestra to stand up and take a bow, does everybody bow but the drummer? I am the drummer. I am also a musician. And what is an inker? An inker is a musician.

"If you want to take the analogy further, when Oscar Levant takes the music, he plays it with a certain intensity. Is he inking it? Is he tracing it? He's taking these notes and he's giving it personality, flavor, excitement. Another guy will take the same notes and treat it a little differently. Now Bob Layton will treat it one way. Frank Giacoia, a genius for his time, will treat it another way. In fact, Frank was one of the reasons I changed my style to get that strong, hard line which reproduces so beautifully. The guy could take nothing and make it look good. He could take a simple ditty of his music and make it sound like a concert.

"Another man is Klaus Jansen, who by the way I gave him his

Andru & Esposito included the Coney Island rollercoaster in both WW and the Suicide Squad

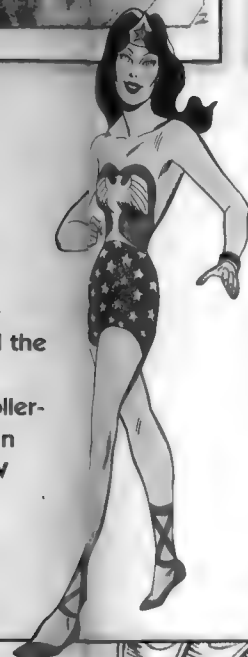


A&E's distinctive look for Lt. Diana Prince



"AND THEN, A SENSATIONAL SPECTACLE, AS THE MIGHTY WONDER WOMAN SKILLFULLY GUIDED THE RUNAWAY ROLLERCOASTER DOWN THE TRACKS OF UNBREAKABLE LINKS..."





first job as a background man, and he's gone far better than I've ever tried to go. So that's what an inker really is—a *good inker*.”

After their Hillman experience, Andru found work at Standard Comics, where he worked with one of his greatest influences, Alex Toth.

“I was greatly impressed with Toth’s style,” Andru recalled. “I thought he was *great*. I completely started to reconvert and geometrize everything to such a point where even I think it became too abstract, and I lost a certain quality of humanism that I regained later. I started doing a few *Joe Yank* for him, and towards the end I was sort of getting the feel of it.”

It was *Joe Yank* that led the pair to their natural home, and the place they would do their greatest work, DC Comics.

“We went to DC around 1952,” Esposito explained. “We happened to know Gaspar Sallardino, who was a fine, fine letterer for years and years. He said to Bob Kanigher, who wanted artists

Two classic panels from Wonder Woman #98, the first all Andru & Esposito issue

for war stories, ‘I know a couple of guys.’ And we took a chance. And that’s how it started. Kanigher gave Ross a couple of war stories and he flipped out over them. He really liked Ross’ story concepts.”

But their work at DC wasn’t enough. Looking to the example of the Simon and Kirby Studio, who self-published as Mainline Comics, Andru and Esposito went into business for themselves too under the names M.R. and Mikeross Publications. This was the point when they decided their partnership was forever. Unfortunately, the same can’t be said of their books. *Mr. Universe*, about the world of professional

wrestling, flopped. Their *3-D Love* and *3-D Romance*

books got hammered when the 3-D comics craze crashed. And their most successful title, a *MAD* imitation called *Get Lost*, met a worse fate.

“We were sued by *MAD* on that,” Esposito explains. “We were the only ones of the *MAD* type magazines making money. It took right off on the first issue. We put out a character called ‘Four-Flush Gordon,’ and they were doing one also. Then we put ‘Strain’ for ‘Shane,’ and *they* were doing it. But we beat them by one issue, and we were sued and taken off the market. It just knocked us out of the box. We never got a chance to continue. We won the case, but lost the war.”

Their longest-running title, a horror title called *Mr. Mystery*, lasted four years—but was crushed by the 1954 backlash against horror comics and resulting comic book implosion, as was their inspiration, Mainline Comics.

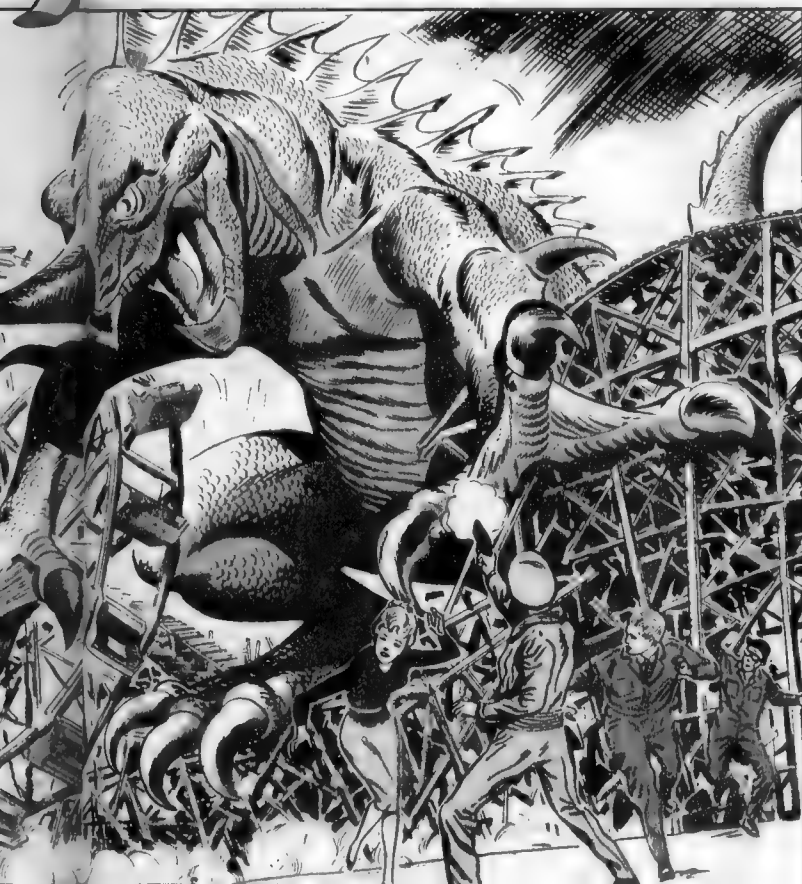
The team returned to freelancing comics, but were not exactly received back as heroes.

“I went to get work from Gaines with Ross in 1955 after we went under,” Esposito remembers. “He didn’t want to talk to us.”

The irony here is that while they were doing *Get Lost* Harvey Kurtzman repeatedly and unsuccessfully tried to lure Andru away from self-publishing and into the *MAD* stable. But Andru preferred to chart his own course. Playfully, he and Esposito signed their *Get Lost* work, “Dru & Espo.”

“After we came out of that, we came back to National Comics again—at a reduced rate, of course,” Andru recalled ruefully. “Because we had left the field for a while, and had to work our way back up again.”

Diana subdues the lightning with her magic lasso in #99 (Jul 1958)



Andru & Esposito

They found themselves back to working for Robert Kanigher. DC was still publishing war stories, but Andru and Esposito had their eyes on a different book.

"The young fellows come along today and I say, 'Gee, these young kids, they are taking away my title,'" Esposito reflects. "This and that, you know. Then one day I sat back and said to myself, 'I did the same thing with H.G. Peter when he was doing *Wonder Woman*.'"

"Bob Kanigher said, 'You know, you guys would be good for *Wonder Woman*, but it's Peter's book.' I said, 'He wants to fish all the time. When's he going to retire?'"

"So one day Bob Kanigher said to him [Peter]—he was late

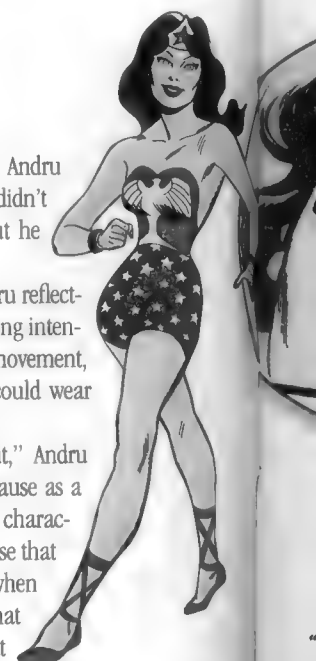
Wonder Woman began with issue #98. Strangely, Andru was reluctant to take the assignment, because he didn't think he could draw attractive-looking women. But he bent his considerable talents to the task.

"I thought of them as Miss America posing," Andru reflected. "There was an innocence to it—I don't recall being intentionally salacious. This was before the women's movement, and 'cheesecake' was considered valid. If people could wear bathing suits, they could wear superhero clothing."

"I enjoyed the sequences with her flying about," Andru added with characteristic modesty. "I guess it's because as a kid I used to have dreams of flying a lot. I like to do characters that are flying in mid-air, because I like that sense that I get from motion pictures—that sense of vertigo when the camera's tilting from the helicopter. You get that sense of pull in your gut, and I like to convey that feeling, because of the sense of exhilaration."

The Andru and Esposito run on *Wonder Woman* remains unrivaled to this day—some nine years, then, for them, the world of *Wonder Woman* turned topsy-turvy.

"We got a call from Bob Kanigher that the next *Wonder Woman* book is going to have a Golden Age look," Esposito recalls. "He said, 'We want you to do it like H.G. Peter.' Maybe you remember those books. I had my daughter take a pen. She was six years old, and she was on the beach. I told her to put these little dots all over the place. We were trying to make it look primitive. Everybody said, 'This is ridiculous.' The fans thought it was crazy. We did about three or four issues. Ross had to draw backwards, almost beneath what he was trying to strive for, to get



on his books—"Why don't you just take it easy and fish and relax and retire. I have two young guys to take over the book."

"I think they gave him some kind of royalty every month for being part of the book. He was in his late seventies. I always say I'll retire when my brush falls off. But that's a bad joke.

"We got the first one and Irving Novick did the cover. I inked the cover for Irving. He did a style that Kanigher said he wanted. So Ross

and I did it. We had a lot of little chicken tracks on the face and so on, and he liked it. It was a big cover of *Wonder Woman*'s head. I think it was past #95. "And finally, Bob said, 'It's yours' to Ross and me, and we were on *Wonder Woman* for a long time."

But for a twist of fate, the duo might never had gotten their crack at the Amazon Princess. Another artist, coming to DC after a stint of doing horror for Martin Goodman's Atlas line, was offered *Wonder Woman*, but opted instead to draw for DC's romance line. His name: John Romita.

The Andru/Esposito run on

A&E's cinematic approach to composition could be breathtaking...



Steve Trevor's adoration of WW earned him the nickname "the male Lois Lane"



**A&E's
awesome
splash for
"Menace of
the Mirage
People!"
from
B&B #38
(Oct/Nov
1961)**



that antiquated 1945 look, which wasn't his style. It was fine when Peter did it—but certainly not fine when Ross and I did it. DC thought by doing it that way they could attract attention. You can't force a trend. You can't force magic. Magic happens."

At the very beginning of their stint, Andru understood that the traditional Wonder Woman look was falling a little behind the times.

"For a while we were experimenting," he noted in 1977, "and for an issue or two I had done a Wonder Woman that closely approximates the Wonder Woman of today in design. Her hair was not as simple on top, but it was long, and more loose-flowing. She was longer and leaner looking. But they felt it was too far removed from the image, and they went back to the old image."

The Andru and Esposito Wonder Woman run was broken when DC decided to update Wonder Woman in 1967, taking her out of her star-spangled costume and putting her in a "mod" uniform.

During their time with Kanigher, Andru and Esposito produced other memorable strips—and some not so memorable. They drew the first Sgt. Rock story. Rock historians dispute whether "The Rock of Easy Company" in *Our Army at War*, #81 stars the true Rock made legendary by Joe Kubert. Even Esposito has his doubts.

"One day I got a check in the mail for a reprint from 1959," Esposito laughs, "and it said 'Sgt. Rock.' And I said, 'I did *Sgt. Rock*?' But obviously I did. But not as the Sgt. Rock, I realized later. It was an incidental story. They were stories with no real continuity that would come back for a second issue. I don't even remember doing the job. I didn't know Sgt. Rock was *anything*."

"I'll never forget. It was a \$600 dollar check, which my wife grabbed. She said, 'Look! A \$600 dollar check. We could use this!' I said, 'That's mine!' She says, 'What do you mean, this is yours? This goes to the house.' I said, 'I didn't know you when I did that. That's *long* before your time!' But she gave me \$200. I blew it on the third race!"

Another strip was Task Force X, the Suicide Squad, which ran in *Brave & Bold*, 1959-61. It focused on a tight group of WWII veterans who battled dinosaurs and other fantastic menaces for the U.S. Government.

"It was done as a fill-in because things were so bad that they had to try three books of a title to see what would catch on," Esposito explains. "So they'd do three months and that would



be it. They put it out with *Brave & Bold* or *Showcase* under another banner before they'd give it its own title. I remember the one with the dinosaurs—the big monster that attacked Coney Island. We had a lot of fun with it."

Despite two separate tryouts and exciting Challengers of the Unknown-style stories, the Suicide Squad never achieved a magazine of its own.

"We were a little crude on it," Esposito acknowledges. "Some of the faces were kind of weak. When I look back on it, I cringe. 'I say, Jeez, our eyes were off here.' Sometimes we'd get bogged down with so much work that Ross and I sometimes didn't step back and look at what we were doing. They brought it back later, but not anything like they originally wanted."

During this time, DC was running two try-out books. The other was *Showcase*, which was edited in rotation by DC's editorial staff. Due to a mix-up, they discovered they had nothing to fill *Showcase* #37, and the deadline was bearing down on them like a freight train. The prolific Kanigher was given the job of rushing out a concept and script virtually overnight. And Andru and Esposito were tasked to make it a book.

"Metal Men was the brainchild of Bob Kanigher," Esposito confirms. "They had to put out *Showcase* every three or four months.

Each editor had a turn at producing new characters, and they figured that would be a springboard for new ideas. If one of them catches on, you'd continue. But nothing caught on. Suicide Squad didn't catch on. *Rip Hunter* wasn't doing so well. But they were all started in that particular vein in *Showcase* or *Brave & Bold*.

"So here was Kanigher's turn, and he came up with an idea of a doctor that creates these robots. He researched gold. He researched what gold can do—that you can thin it out and flatten it out for miles and still hold its strength. (Cont. on page 66)



Mike Esposito (left) & the late Ross Andru in the early 1990s

After about seven years in this direction, the series underwent a sudden “mid-course” overhaul, echoing that which had happened to Batman, in response to poor sales and reader discontent over the title’s direction. The decision, however, was made to revisit and replicate the Golden Age Wonder Woman in story and art, and the next year or so was spent in an attempt to regain the true essence of William Moulton Marston’s modern-day archetype—a “Retro Golden Age” period, if you will.

A quick glance at the listings in the *Overstreet Price Guide* summarizes some of the key issues and events. The revised origin appeared in *Wonder Woman* #98 (May 1958), in which Andru and Esposito began their stint as interior artists. A “secret origin” was prided in issue #105, which contains an adventure of Princess Diana as an uncostumed teenager, in essence a “try-out” for the debut of a costumed “Wonder Girl” in #107. Not surprisingly, “Wonder Tot” followed in #122, and all three phases of Diana came together as the “Wonder Family” for the first time in issue #123, with “reunions” in #129 and 133 (not to mention in issues #135, 138, 140, 144, 147 and 149). Stories from the “Retro Golden Age” (if you will) began in #156, and continued from #159 onwards towards #170; after which the title reverted to more modern day settings through #177, before undergoing yet another radical facelift.

The Basics

The basic elements of the Silver Age Wonder Woman are familiar: her origins as Princess Diana, daughter of Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons who lives in the “world of men” as “Wonder Woman” in the fight against evil and injustice, her powers and abilities; her accouterments (or “equipment,” as one is reluctant to refer to them as “weapons,” for she never used them offensively or for ill intent); her “civilian” (secret) identity as Lt. Diana Prince; and of course, her would-be suitor, the persistent Col. Steve Trevor.

Diana’s position in the Military Intelligence office of one Col. Steve Trevor, came about as a result of a challenge Steve made with Wonder Woman in “Top Secret” (#99, July 1958). The rapidity with which she passed the presumable rigorous testing and screening for such a high security position, all in the space of a morning (just one page of the story), brings to mind in a strange way the recent headlines about security leaks at places like Los Alamos. No wonder they call it “Military Intelligence.” In the opening of this story, Diana’s new identity is oddly described as an “impersonation,” although there is certainly no trickery or foul intent involved. The story is also notable for setting the tone of Steve Trevor’s adolescent attitude of infatuation towards Wonder Woman that would get worked to death over the next few years.

A general acknowledgment seems to pervade Military Intelligence that Lt. Prince is the *de-facto* liaison with Wonder Woman. It seems as if the whole world was aware of this relationship, to the point that (fictional) Wonder Woman fan club members would, as a matter of routine, visit Lt. Prince at her office, for information on such pressing matters such as the expressions and phrases commonly exclaimed by Wonder



The Silver Age Wonder Woman

Woman ("The Proving of Wonder Woman," #131, July 1962). Wonder Woman, in turn, must have been so obviously highly regarded at Intelligence she's free to walk the very hallways on a regular basis, perhaps on orders from Col. Trevor himself.

There were no real deviations from Wonder Woman's given powers and abilities, such as acrobatic ability, invulnerability, super-strength and speed and was able to glide on the slightest of air currents, almost indefinitely, to the point where it sure looked like she was flying! She also had telescopic vision (#118), and was evidently able to spend extended periods of time underwater without coming up for breath. Sounds like she was born on Krypton!

The roster of accouterments (or "gadgets," as Maurice Horn termed them) was essentially unchanged, although the design of the invisible robot plane was updated. Of all her equipment, the magic lasso received the most attention in many of the stories in the multitude of applications it was put to. Not only could the lasso compel its "captive" to reveal the truth, but also it could be used for rescue, and it had incredible tensile strength, for grappling, dismantling and crushing objects (and at least one villain). It conducted heat and electricity, as befitting its fine goldbraided chain material. Other uses included replacement rails for an out-of-control roller coaster ("Top Secret"), and as an auger for tunneling out of a collapsed deep sea cave ("The Origin of the Amazing Robot Plane," #128). The lasso was so strong that Wonder Woman could even move an active volcano with it ("Attack of the Human Iceberg!" #135), all while gliding on those air currents! The lasso was also voice-activated (same issue), just like the robot plane.

These multiple applications served to deflect attention from the control symbolism of the lasso, and the resultant bondage overtones that were noted by some critics of the Golden Age series. Aside from rounding up the bad guys (and large, threatening birds), folks in Silver Age stories just weren't getting as tied up or chained up as much as their Golden Age counterparts did. One notable exception, however, was Wonder Woman's encounter with Mouse-Man ("The Amazonian Mouse Trap!" #143), who not only entrapped her with the lasso, but also reduced her, with a liquid serum, to mouse size. Talk about getting no respect!

Instead, the "bondage angle" played out in more subtle fashions, with people getting caught in the clutches of those large threatening birds or undersea monsters, getting "iced" over (#120, 135, and 152), immobilized by a camera flash (#116) or settling for a pair of concrete shoes, as Wonder Woman did in "Vengeance of the Angle-Man!" (#128, February 1962). In this story, believe it or not, she was still able to "glide" about, and perform an underwater rescue with her feet stuck to a giant concrete block! Then there's Wonder Woman and Steve, doused with an explosives compound and bound together by the living mustache of Egg Fu, being flailed against the ground mercilessly over several panels in #158 ("The Fury of Egg Fu!" November 1965). Ouch!

The lore of the bracelets appeared to be downplayed, and were not used as extensively as the lasso. However, Wonder Woman didn't hesitate to throw her bracelets and tiara against the crystalline "creature from another world"



Lightning was the best defense for defeating the Mercurian Menace when he battled Wonder Girl, in "The Secret of Volcano Mountain" (#120, February 1961), and for defeating Multiple-Man at the end of #124 ("The Impossible Day!" August 1961). Lightning also freed Wonder Woman from her "concrete shoes" in #128. A collision with a meteor was sufficient for putting Multiple-Man away at the end of "The Kite of Doom!" (#138, May 1963).

In a streak of contrast, Wonder Woman finds herself harassed by Jove's lightning bolts during an Amazonian challenge in "The Proving of Wonder Woman." Taking this one step further she herself becomes "The Human Lightning" generator in #140 (August 1963) thanks to the intervention of the Duke of Deception. Diana ultimately figured this out and gave the Duke's invasion fleet a charged welcome, kamikaze-style—only to wake up and discover it was all a dream!

This latter transformation was but a prelude to becoming a human explosive (along with Steve Trevor) thanks to the infamous Egg Fu in issues #157 and 158. Other transformations included Wonder Woman changed into a living tree (not unlike a similar situation that took place in the *Justice League*) in "The Terror Trees of Forbidden Island" in #143. On a lighter note were the transformations of Wonder Girl into a "Bird-Girl" in #147 by the power of Athena, and also into a mermaid in #147 and #140 (thanks to Morpheus letting Mer-Boy's wish come true in a dream).

The Ever-Expanding Wonder "Family"

The focus of the series became increasingly diffused, with the growth in both the supporting cast as well as the variants of Wonder Woman herself. The introduction of Wonder Girl was received well enough to warrant increasing numbers of stories devoted just to her. Ultimately, the series would feature a smorgasbord—a Wonder Woman or Wonder Girl solo adventure on Paradise Island, a Wonder Woman adventure away from the island, and the Wonder Family "impossible" stories in which Hippolyta and Wonder Tot would also get to share the spotlight.

As an adult, Wonder Woman visited her Amazonian home on Paradise

Island enough times that it became the setting of many of the adventures. In some episodes the visits were made for participation in the frequent Amazonian contests or challenges that took place. In "The Proving of Wonder Woman," for example, Diana had to be challenged once a year to prove her worthiness of representing the Amazons in the outer world. Many such trips were made at the request of Hippolyta, who, as the "Family" expanded, was increasingly referred to in the series as "Wonder Queen," although the goddess certainly didn't forget her given name (as in #149). It also appears that Hippolyta decided to have more fun as a blonde in the Silver Age, reverting to a brunette for the "Retro Golden" phase.

Just a few other Amazons were identified by name, which conveyed a sense of a anonymous sisterhood. One was Amata (identified in #124), the scientist who operated the Time and Space Televisor, which could also teleport people through time. Paradise Island seemed chock full of advanced Amazonian technology, in anachronistic contrast to its neoclassical architecture and setting. There was the communications "omni-wave receiver," a shrinking ray, an experimental photo lab and the like. Paradise Island also maintained its own fleet of spacefighters and the Amazons patrolled the skies regularly looking to prevent possible alien invasions. When they weren't busy on patrol duty or engaging in contests, the Amazons apparently enjoyed filming and videotaping, creating an extensive library that would play a big role in #124 ("The Impossible Day!"). One can imagine that after a hard day of challenges, contests, and fighting off alien invaders, even Amazons felt the need "veg" out with a couple of good videos!

Love, as Deep as Paper

Rounding out the expanded family picture were new characters brought on board to heighten the romance aspect. But pre-dating these suitors was, first and foremost, Steve Trevor, who was so utterly infatuated with his saving "angel" (an adjective he first used to describe Wonder Woman in #98) his behavior approached the point of annoyance. Poor Wonder Woman had the patience of a saint to put off his relentless quest for that kiss and her hand in marriage, patiently explaining, time and again, that she could not marry until her services are not needed to battle crime and injustice.

Col. Trevor is portrayed as a versatile officer able to go from desk duty to piloting a jet fighter, and more—even handling a magic carpet (#120), but his ability and fearlessness doesn't offset the persistence and bugginess he would display throughout the next 50 plus issues in his interactions with his "angel." This sort of behavior would warrant sexual harassment charges these days.

In her secret identity as Lt. Prince, Diana was generally portrayed as a very professional woman at Intelligence, maintaining a collegial relationship with a Col. Trevor. There was little serious romantic attraction depicted or suggested between them, outside of an extended session of hand holding in #149!

Rivaling Steve, was Manno, a.k.a "Mer-Man," who actually made his debut as "Mer-Boy," a suitor of Wonder Girl, in #107 (July 1959). What's noteworthy here is that Robert Kanigher basically got a leg (or perhaps "tail") up on Mort Weisinger, doing a role-reversal twist on the Superman-Lori Lemaris relationship just two months after Ms. Lemaris' debut in *Superman* #129, and over a year before Jerro was introduced as part of the Supergirl "family" in *Action* #269.

As an adult, Manno first crossed paths with Steve Trevor in "Wonder Woman's Impossible Decision" (which is not to be confused with an "impos-

sible" story) in #118 (November 1960), and their interaction was generally cordial, owing to the fact that each saved the other's life at some point in the saga. However, things got competitively unpleasant between the two in "Wonder Woman, Battle Prize," #125 (October 1961), and it took a mutual enemy (Amoeba-Man) to bring about a truce.

Initially, Mer-Boy had pretty much all of Wonder Girl's attention, generally engaging her in his show-off antics and stunts that would inevitably get him into some peril or another. In "The Cave of Secret Creatures" (#116), his mis-adventures were instigated by the mermaid, Ferra, who ultimately had to beg Wonder Girl on bended "fin" to rescue Mer-Boy. The situation changed, however, with the introduction of that avian suitor, Bird-Boy, in "Mer-Boy vs. Bird-Boy!" (#144, February 1964). From this point on the Wonder Girl storylines would feature a fair amount of abrasive bickering, insults and challenges between these two, much to Wonder Girl's aggravation and distraction, as highlighted in #150.

It took an (interim) "adopted" father (in "Wonder Girl's Mysterious Father," #152, February 1965) to get the two boys to behave like "gentlemen." This particular story involves a shipwrecked circus performer, suffering from amnesia, who mistakes Wonder Girl for his daughter and performing partner. Wonder Girl, who was so caught up in the idea of having a fatherly presence in her life, can't bear to tell him the truth. This story, the second of two Wonder Girl solo features in #152, was well-written and poignant, it has a special resonance these days when there is much ado about fatherless children and responsible fatherhood. Coupled with the lead story in this issue "Wonder Girl's Decision of Doom!" a coming-of-age story where Wonder Girl is tested in battle and has to rely on her wits to stay focused on the "objective" of the challenge. *Wonder Woman* #152 is a highlight issue!

When it came to Wonder Woman's suitors competing against each other in lopsided contests, such as Steve vs. Manno in a swimming challenge, the Princess could always be counted on to intervene, so that a tie would result (#125 and 150). In these cases, throwing the contest clearly avoids the issue of Wonder Woman (or Wonder Girl) having to accept a forced "choice" of whom she "favors," although her prerogatives and mission in the world

(Continued on page 70)



The Travails of Wonder Woman's Transformation in

Wonder Woman #176 ("Threat of the Triple Stars") found DC's Amazon princess fighting crime without benefit of her super-strength or speed. Although never explained in any detail, every June 18th Wonder Woman would lose her super-powers for a period of twenty-four hours. Of course, those powers returned by the end of the story—just in time for her to subdue a gang of armed robbers terrorizing a carnival. Three issues later, Wonder Woman would voluntarily renounce her Amazon heritage, thereby forfeiting her super-human powers and magic weaponry (the bullet deflecting bracelets, the invisible jet, and the golden lasso). She would live without them for more than four years... from 1968-1972.

Amazing and bewildering long-time readers and collectors all over the country, the controversial "mod" cover of issue #178 promised readers a whole new Wonder Woman... and "ended" a legacy begun in the early 1940s

Wonder Woman was one of the many heroes whom DC Comics overhauled during the late '60s and early '70s. Green Arrow and Green Lantern were banded together into one title that addressed social ills of the day ranging from racism and poverty to religious cults and drug abuse among teens. Robin and his comic wisecracks were shipped off to college so that Batman could return to Bob Kane's original dark vision of the loner vigilante. The volume was even turned down on Superman's seemingly limitless strength, allowing him to come across more vulnerable, more human.

There was, however, a world of difference between having powers reduced and having them taken away altogether. Wonder Woman's sudden mortality was not the first change through

which the character had undergone. In the late '50s, in response to criticism that creator Charles Moulton had turned Wonder Woman too masculine, the title evolved into something of a romance comic, emphasizing the woman behind the wonders. Wonder Woman herself even played Dear Abby for readers, running an advice column for the lovelorn. Later, when H.G. Peter left the strip and Andru & Esposito took over in mid 1958, DC reworked her origin, bringing forth feminine characteristics which had been lost since her debut in *All Star* #8.

Issue #178 ("Wonder Woman's Rival"), the first to herald the arrival of a new Wonder Woman, originally looked to be another cosmetic touch-up along these same lines. Halfway through the story, Diana Prince traded in her military grays for psychedelic dresses and thigh-high boots. She needed the new

wardrobe for an undercover assignment, searching hippie bars for the flower child who could clear Steve Trevor of murder charges. After her shopping spree, Diana falls in love with her new image. "Wow! I'm gorgeous!" she declared. "I should have done this ages ago!"

One issue later, Diana changed far more than her clothes in a move that was truly unprecedented. Never before had a hero been so completely revamped and stripped of her powers. This was not just for an issue or even a multi-part story... but possibly forever. Within the context of the storyline, Diana was forced to choose between joining her mother and fellow Amazons

on their journey into a new dimension or to remain behind in man's world... powerless! In the landmark issue #179 ("Wonder Woman's Last Battle"), Princess Diana chose the latter so that she could help her beloved Steve Trevor, who had been accused of stealing government documents. Wonder

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Mortals

the late '60s

BY GERARD J WAGGETT



Wonder Woman underwent the Amazon rite of renunciation, vowing: "I hereby relinquish all mystic skills! I lay upon the sacred altar the glories of the Amazons and willingly condemn myself to the travails of mortals."

In what some readers must have taken as a cruel storyline twist, Steve Trevor, the man for whom Wonder Woman had renounced her heritage, died just one issue after her great sacrifice. Steve Trevor had in fact been killed off because Denny O'Neil, who was editing the title at the time, simply didn't care for the character—not much of a secret to anyone who read the letter columns. When asked by one saddened reader why Steve needed to die, O'Neil responded: "Steve Trevor was dull and boring, and I didn't like him much, so I disposed of him."

According to *DC Comics: Sixty Years of the World's Favorite Comic Book Heroes*, "the decision to do something new with the Amazon came from head honcho Carmine Infantino. Despite her fame, her sales were dismal"—so dismal that DC had considered canceling the book altogether. DC's superhero comics in general had not been selling well for some time. It made sense for O'Neil to transform Wonder Woman into a different style of heroine, more modern and hopefully more marketable.

More than any other hero still in the comic book universe, save for Marvel's Captain America, Wonder Woman truly belonged to the early '40s. She had literally burst onto the comic book scene as America was heading into WWII, making her first appearance in December 1941, the same month when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. Wonder Woman with her eagle-embossed halter and star-studded skirt became the embodiment of patriotism, a female counterpart to Uncle Sam.

By the late '60s, however, the American attitude toward patriotism had changed. Soldiers were dying in Vietnam in a well televised conflict which Congress had never even officially declared a war. Night after night, the American public watched the United States losing to a presumed inferior.

For decades Wonder Woman had symbolized America's strength in battle. It made painful sense that she would have

her own strength stripped away during a time period when the United States military so publically fell short of invincible.

Vietnam took a heavy toll on patriotism. In 1942, teenagers lied about their age so that they could fight Nazis. By 1968, young men were heading to college, heading to Canada, or finding any subterfuge imaginable to avoid being shipped off "to the jungle." To protest the war, flags were burned on campuses across the country. Uniformed soldiers returning from their tours of duty were literally spat upon.

A landmark issue, #179 depicts Wonder Woman giving up her legacy for Steve Trevor with the "Amazon Rite of Renunciation"



Wonder Woman of the '60s

Given the public's growing disdain for the flag and for symbols of patriotism in general, Wonder Woman's costume must have been seen as something of a deterrent to potential young readers. By issue #185 ("Them"), Diana Prince had adopted her official new look, always clad in white. Her red, white, and blue image had literally been bleached away. One might even describe her new look as British, popularized as it was by Diana Rigg as Emma Peel on *The Avengers*, a spy series imported

Arguably, *The New Wonder Woman's* best issues were its spy stories, which accounted for a full third of the run. The book introduced a new criminal mastermind, Dr. Cylvia Cyber, "a strangely beautiful, wholly merciless woman," served by an army of female mercenaries. Dr. Cyber immediately assumed arch-enemy status by killing off Wonder Woman's beloved Steve Trevor. After Dr. Cyber's face was disfigured during battle with a rival crime syndicate, her obsession with beauty added a fascinating dimension to her personality.

Although the country of Dr. Cyber's origin was never mentioned, she certainly embodied many of the fears Americans harbored about the Soviet Union and communism in general. Dr. Cyber (whose name might very well have been a play on the Russian wilderness Siberia) held one ultimate goal: "all governments of earth... declare me supreme ruler." Toward that goal, she bought and (more often) stole government secrets and ruthlessly slaughtered anyone, even whole countries who stood in her way. Dr. Cyber had already taken over one town in the Alps (WW #181: "The Wrath of Dr. Cyber") and was more than willing to destroy Hong Kong with her earthquake machine to scare the remaining world into immediate surrender (WW #188: "Cyber's Revenge").

While young men were burning their draft cards in the late '60s, feminists were burning their bras. Responding to the increasing popularity of the women's lib movement, Denny O'Neil sought to create in the new Wonder Woman the sort of heroine to whom young women could look up. That, it should be noted, had been Charles Moulton's original goal with the character; Moulton wanted to give girls a comic book and a hero with which they could identify.

From a feminist perspective, the new Wonder Woman could either be praised or damned. *Ms.* magazine editor Gloria Steinem chose to criticize the removal of Wonder

Woman's powers. Worse than simply have the powers stolen away, Wonder Woman had willingly given them up—an act of submission made solely to better one man. A potentially dangerous message was being sent out to impressionable young minds, male and female alike: If women wanted to belong in "man's world," they needed to sacrifice any special talents they possessed—especially if those talents would make them superior to men. That very same message that had been drilled into young minds for years through such TV shows as *Bewitched* and *I Dream of Jeannie*, sitcoms in which the female leads, a witch and a genie, were constantly ordered by their men to refrain from using their magic... their special talents.

On the other hand, it could be argued that Denny O'Neil created an even greater role model by removing Wonder Woman's powers. By the end of issue #179, Diana Prince was no longer



I Ching is shot by a sniper and dies in Diana Prince's arms in WW #204

Hinting at another major change in the strip, the cover of Wonder Woman #180 suggests that Steve Trevor may die. In fact, the character is killed off in the very next issue

from Great Britain.

Removing this new incarnation of Wonder Woman one step further away from her image as the ultimate American heroine, Diana Prince was paired up with I Ching, a blind Chinese elder who trained her in karate, judo and kung fu—"the deadly battle arts of the Orient." Diana's mastery of these skills no doubt had something to do with the rising popularity of martial arts films.

In addition to the very hot conflict in Vietnam, America was also waging a Cold War with Russia during this time period. The threat there was not so overt, not so easy to target as the Nazis had been some 25 years before. Strength alone seemed insufficient to insure victory. A spy game needed to be played. While the super-powered Wonder Woman of the 1940s made for the perfect heroine to tackle Nazis, a more subtle attack was needed for the threat posed by Russia in the 1960s. A Wonder Woman stripped of her super-human powers, a woman forced to rely more on her wits, made for a better soldier in this Cold War. And since the truth mattered little in this ongoing conflict, Wonder Woman's golden lasso was an easily abandoned piece of weaponry.

blessed with the super-speed or super-strength, but she was still the title character of her book. She was still Wonder Woman. She remained a heroine not because of magic but through hard work and a deepfelt faith in what was right. This new incarnation of Wonder Woman became someone with whom younger women could more realistically identify, someone they could credibly see as themselves in the future.

Along with the rise in feminism, the late '60s witnessed an increased sexual freedom, especially among the youth. Ridding the *Wonder Woman* title of its longtime hero Steve Trevor freed Diana Prince for participation in this sexual revolution. While Diana's physical contact with the opposite sex never moved beyond kissing, she did tend to jump from man to man. One issue after her longtime love Steve Trevor died in her arms, Diana Prince was lying in bed, mooning over private eye Tim Trench.

"At times he makes me forget Steve... almost," Diana says of Tim, then muses, "I wonder if being human means being fickle." For her, it most certainly did. Two months may have passed between issues #180 ("A Death for Diana") and #181 ("The Wrath of Dr. Cyber"), but nothing close to a respectable grieving period had yet to pass within the timeline of the story.

On the very first page of the next issue (*WW* #181, ironically titled "A Time to Love, A Time to Die"), Tim Trench dumped Diana and took off with a fortune in stolen jewels. Literally hours later, Diana found herself in the arms of another man, Reginald Hyde-White. After learning that he'd actually been working for Dr. Cyber, Diana lost control. With tears pouring down her cheeks, she beat him nearly to death. She might very well have done so had I Ching not stepped in to restrain her. "Those blows can cripple," he warned her, to which she replied, "I want to hurt him. I want him to feel what I'm feeling."

While her anger could be analyzed as repressed grief over Steve's death, the attack on Reginald Hyde-White, unjustified in its extremity, must have confused readers. Yes, Reginald had betrayed her, but Diana had known the man less than a day, on top of which he had been her third boyfriend in as many issues! Denny O'Neil wisely steered Diana away from romantic involvements for several months after which she would be charmed by a series of potential suitors, some as undesirable as Tim and Reginald: an Irish pilot, two princes, an assassin posing as a diplomat, and yet another shady detective.

In late 1969, DC slipped a none-too-subtle tale of sexual perversion past the Comics Code censors. Issue #185, simply titled "Them," presented an unusual gang of villains: "Top Hat, Moose Mama, and Pinto... as freaked out a trio of females as you'd never want to meet." The outrageously and androgynously attired trio tried to kidnap Cathy Perkins, a runaway whom they had

Diana Prince protects a runaway from a trio of lesbian sadists in *Wonder Woman* #182



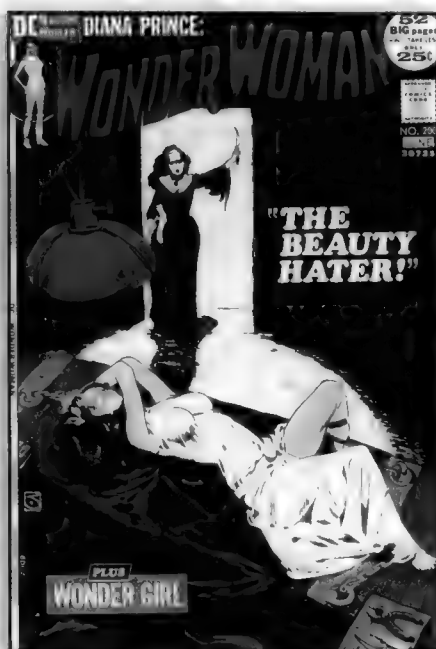
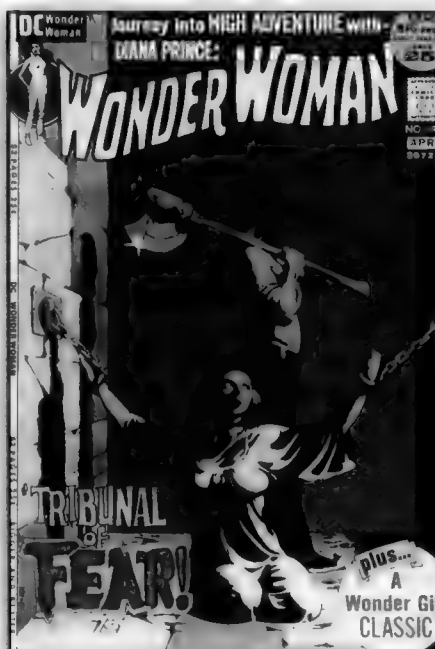
once literally enslaved. In one of the most sexually unnerving moments had encountered since the initiation of the Comics Code, Top Hat tossed a dog collar onto the floor of

Diana's boutique, then demanded that Cathy put it on. Top Hat also tried to collar Diana herself. "Them" presented a nightmarish counterpoint to the lesbian undercurrents which had run throughout *Wonder Woman*'s history since the very first issue where readers were taken to Paradise Island, populated as it was by nothing but beautiful female warriors.

After getting away with "Them," *Wonder Woman* began

All scarce-in-grade 48/52 page issues, the covers of *Wonder Woman* #196, 199, & 200 feature Diana in bondage... three times in less than a year. Also the covers of #199 & 200 are rendered in a "gothic" style reminiscent of *Dark Mansion of Forbidden Love*

(Continued on page 69)



Sold.

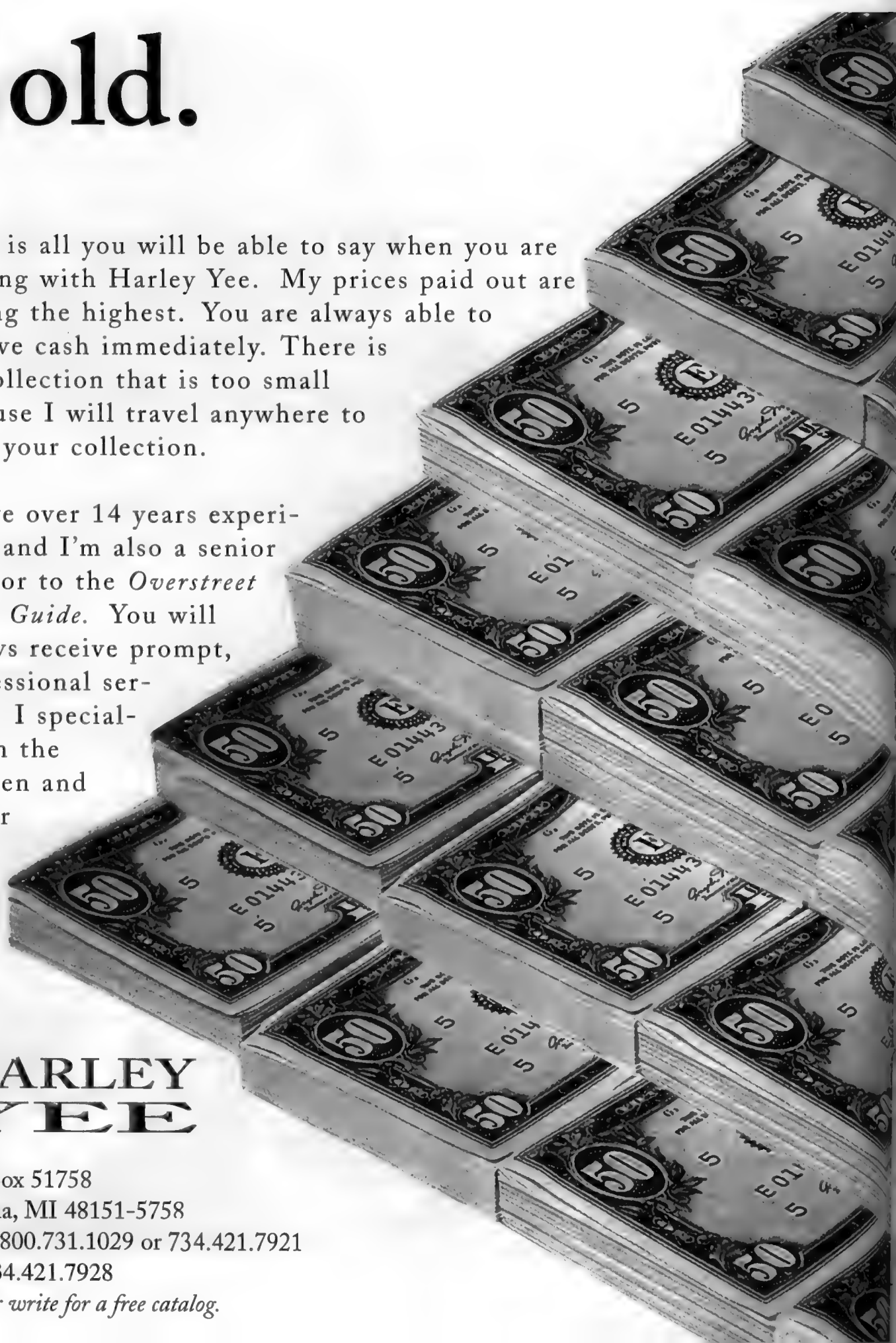
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Task Force X!

Six Silver Missions of the Suicide Squad

BY PAT S. CALHOUN

DC was having a strong success with two non-superhero costumed-character team titles in the early Silver years. They purchased Blackhawk from the moribund Quality Comics in 1956 (the first DC ish was #108 January 1957) and—even more important—was the seminal series launched by Jack “King” Kirby (with an assist from Joe Simon), *Challengers of the Unknown*. Although *Showcase* #4’s Flash revival is credited as the start of the Silver Age, the Challs first appearance in *Showcase* #6 (January/February 1957) put the team concept into focus—one of the two key ideas of the era. DC would try one more non-super team before the Golden Age superhero revival came to that fruitful conclusion, the ultimate super-team, the Justice League of America. The third non-super group didn’t fare so well, but the two three-issue runs of Suicide Squad (in DC’s other tryout title, *Brave & Bold*) feature clearly-conceived characters in well-crafted tales. These six issues form a charming little corner of DC history, with the first three coming during that peak year when the Silver Age really kicked into gear.

Brave & Bold #25 (August/September 1959) introduced us to “America’s top secret weapon—Task Force X,” also known as the Suicide Squad for their “utter defiance of danger.” A mysterious red wave washes over the beach of a popular seaside resort and fuses it to glass. Police and fire departments are summoned but cannot halt the wave’s progress upshore... burning everything in its path. Air Force bombers are called in, but the weapons have no affect, and one plane goes down in flames. It’s time for Task Force X...

The Suicide Squad: crack pilot Captain Rick Flag, Karin Davies war-heroine nurse and specialist in flight medicine, astronomer Dr. Evans, and physicist Jess Bright subdue the wave’s fiery menace only to have a giant dinosaur-like creature that radiates intense cold hatch from the aftermath and put them back in the fray. Intertwined through both battles are flashbacks showing how all the team members lost close associates in the war and made vows to “carry on for them”—which fueled their do-or-die attitudes. After they disable the creature’s “freeze” power it starts sucking the chlorophyll out of all the plant life in the area—the deadliest threat yet. How the Squad solves this third prob-

lem makes a fine finish to a classically-structured Silver DC novel.

The art by Ross Andru and Mike Esposito is also classic Silver DC. In short, the debut issue made a most impressive package.

Brave & Bold #26 (October/November 1959) is another winner—with a dynamic “shrunk Suicide Squad attacked by sea gull” cover for “The Sun Curse.” The story starts with the team out in space—getting exposed to cosmic rays. The ante goes up fast when the ray effects take hold during re-entry and reduce the Squad to several inches height just before crash-landing in a commie submarine base preparing to cripple the USA with atomic missiles. Can four toy-sized soldiers destroy an enemy camp? You better believe it—and how they do so wraps up a neat novelette.

This issue’s second story has the last of the dinosaurs waking up after millennial slumbers to wreak havoc in Paris. It’s standard stuff, but the ending is well-conceived and splendidly choreographed.

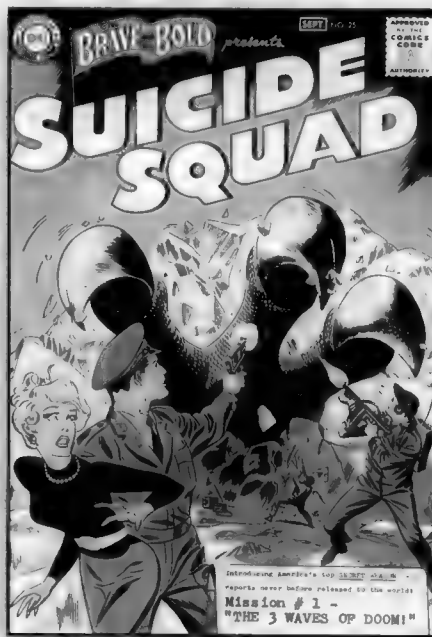
The last of the first three tryouts, *Brave & Bold* #27 (December/January 1960), is also good; perhaps the series didn’t so much fail to find acceptance as get way overshadowed by the JLA sensation that started in issue #28. Considered the best of the six tryout missions and the best cover by most collectors, #27’s “The Creature of Ghost Lake” rises up near a nuclear bomb test area and ends up walking around with Karin in one hand and the live bomb ticking towards detonation in the other! So now the three men in the Squad must defeat the monster—and fast—without harming the lady they’re all sweet on. The stories and situations read like Robert Kanigher had a large role in creating the Suicide Squad, and he is listed as editor in the indicia.

Brave & Bold #37 (August/September 1961) brought Task Force X back “by popular request” for another round of adventures. But a lot had happened in two years; DC was now laying it on with a trowel. “Raid of the Dinosaurs” pits the

Squad—not against one or even a few dinos but a whole world of them—with a vast alien intelligence controlling them for an invasion of Earth! The way they fight the reptiles with gadgets upon gadgets from their “utility belts” is also much less satisfying than the clever campaign against the “Serpent of the Subway” in #26.

“Threat of the Giant Eye” is equally insipid. Plus neither novelette mentions the “carrying on for dead partners” origin material from *B&B* #25.

ALL CHARACTERS & COVERS © 2000 DC



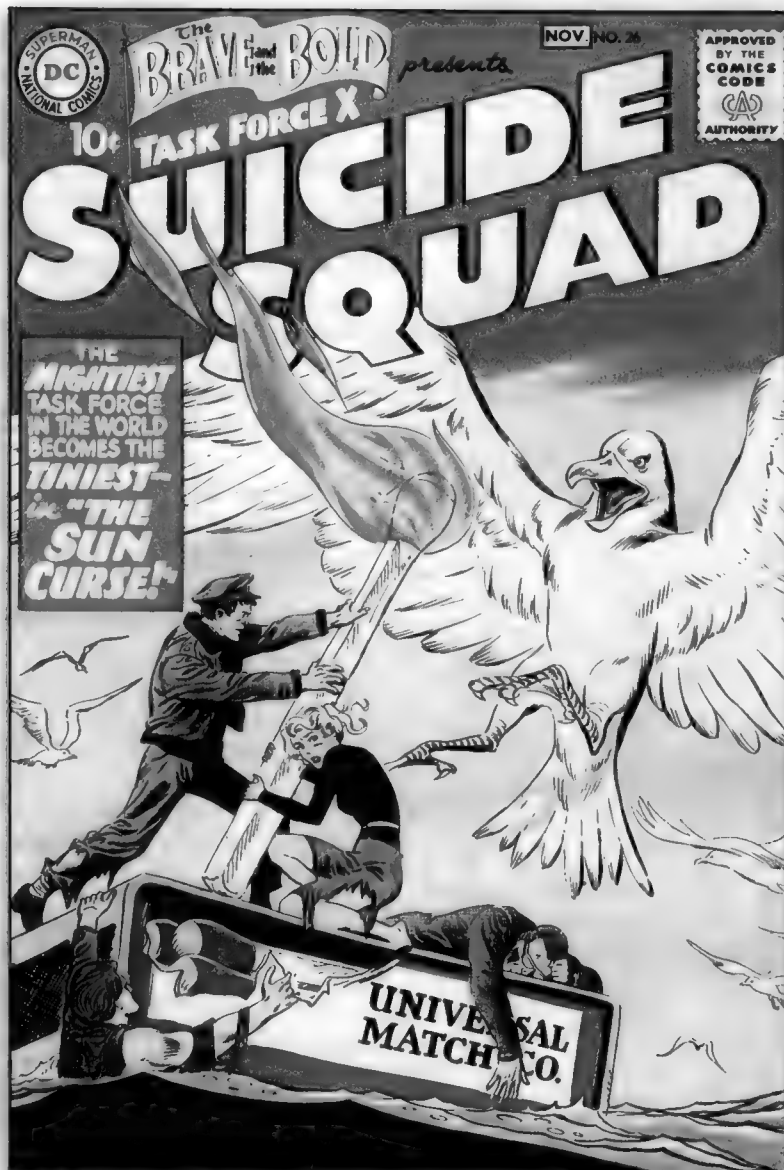
Task Force X!

In **B&B #39**, Andru and Esposito's **Suicide Squad** stars Rick Flag and Karin Davies bare a striking resemblance to Doc Will Magnus & Tina of **Metal Men** Fame

A superb example of composition, the cover of **Brave & Bold #26** is a Silver Age classic

The Squad's fifth outing in **B&B #38** (October/November 1961) features two stories as well, both better than #37's offerings. "Master of the Dinosaurs" has Task Force X confront a big-game hunter from another world who trains huge pterodactyls to go out and collect trophies for him. It's the usual stuff but readable enough. "Menace of the Mirage People" has the Squad up against an alien who can induce controlled hallucinations in those around him. But the four human daredevils show him there are other ways to tell what's really real...

Brave & Bold #39 (December/January 1962) added a little copper to the Silver Age: it was the first 12¢ issue. "Prisoners of the Dinosaur Zoo" feels like a story that was written around the cover scene (as was often the case at DC). It doesn't make much sense other than being a narrative that has the Squad sucked into a massive maw... "Rain of Fire" also lacks cohesion, mixing a process that turns that Squad into statues that only high heat can



free with a volcanic eruption and getting the expected results.

"Rain of Fire" is notable though because of Andru and Esposito's rendition of the Suicide Squad as metallic statues. Several panels in this final story depict characters that are dead ringers for Doc Magnus and Tina (Platinum) of **Metal Men** Fame... another DC team that would debut just two months later in **Showcase #37**!

It's not so much that the second three-issue run was inferior as that the first three issues were superior: **Suicide Squad** was the most obscure creation of that "end of the fifties start of the sixties" magic moment when DC could do no wrong.

PAGE 35: The first issue (**B&B #25**, Aug/Sep 1959) established the "monster menace" motif that would be used on all six tryout issue covers

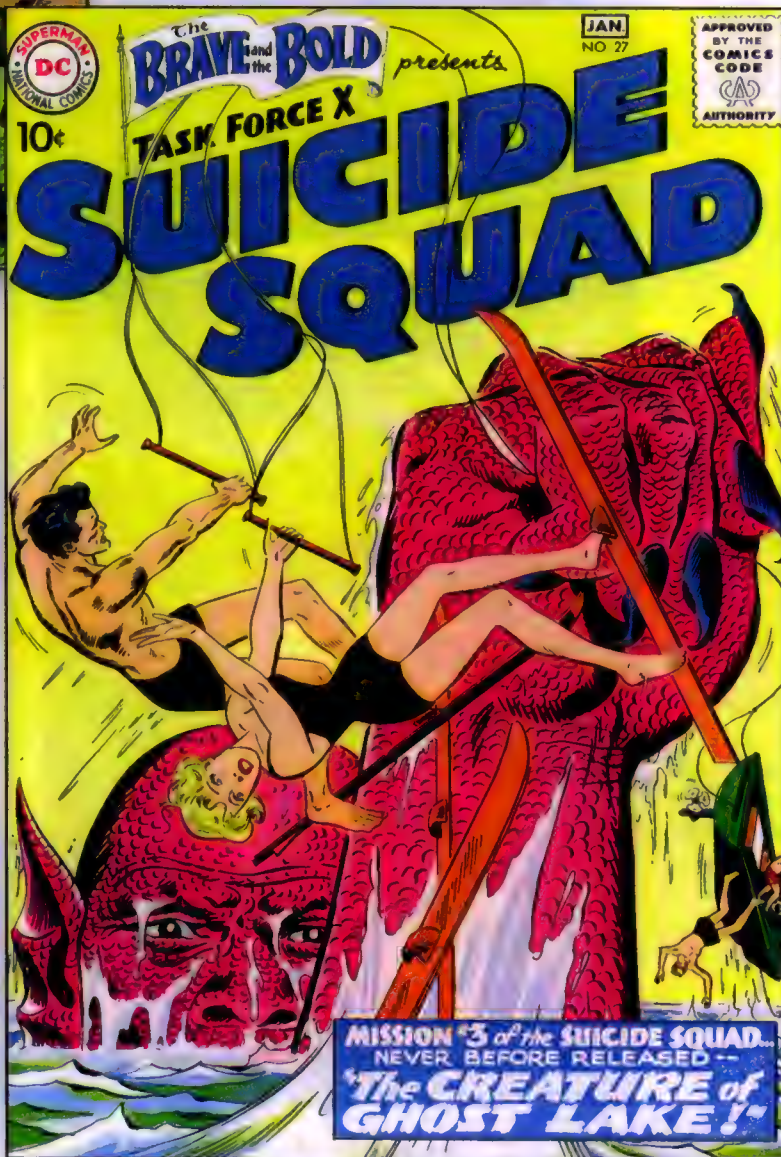
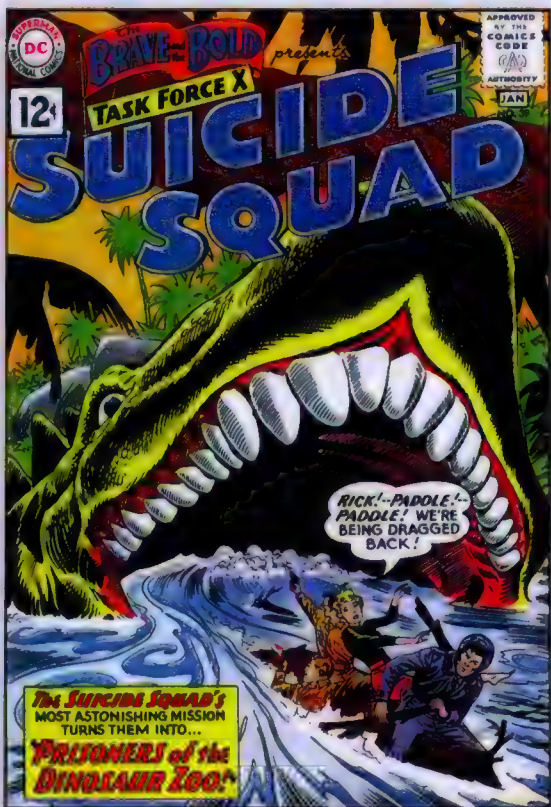
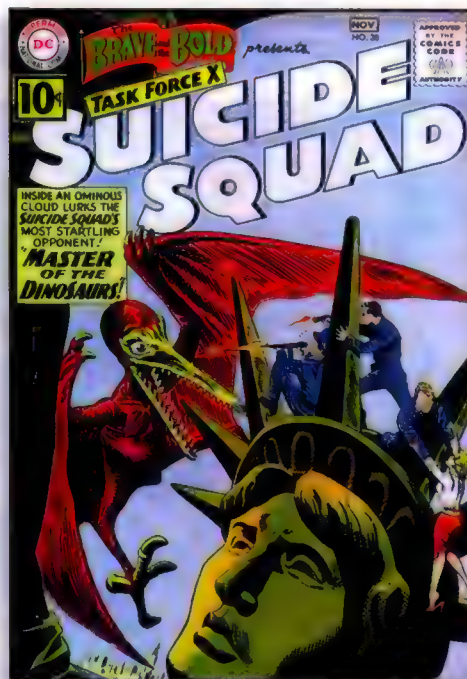
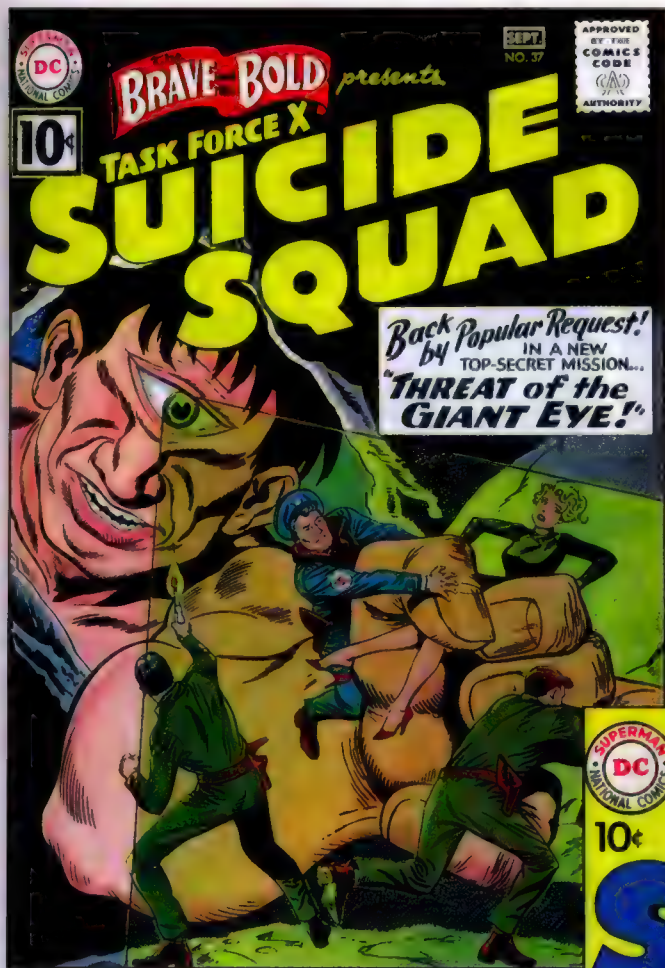
FACING PAGE: Clutching Liberty's crown, the Squad fends off a pterodactyl on the highly effective and memorable cover of **B&B #38** (Oct/Nov 1961)

Taking their cue from Homer's *Odyssey*, Task Force X fights a giant cyclops on **B&B #37** (Aug/Sep 1961)

One of the tougher **B&B** issues to find, #27's (Dec/Jan 1960) eye-catching cover has lived in the shadow of #28's **JLA** debut since the Silver Age

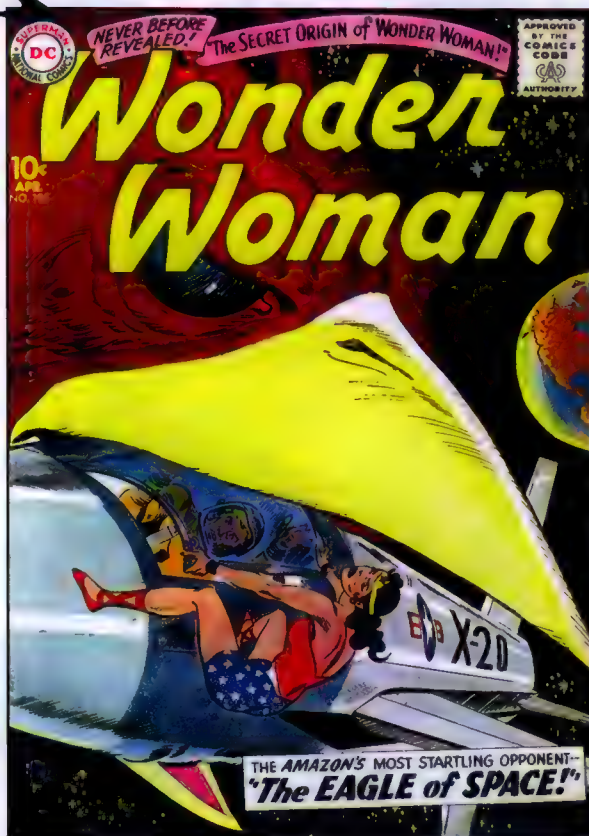
Brave & Bold #39 (Dec/Jan 1962) features "four Jonahs and a dinosaur" as the final tryout cover. With this issue, the 10¢ comic became extinct too!

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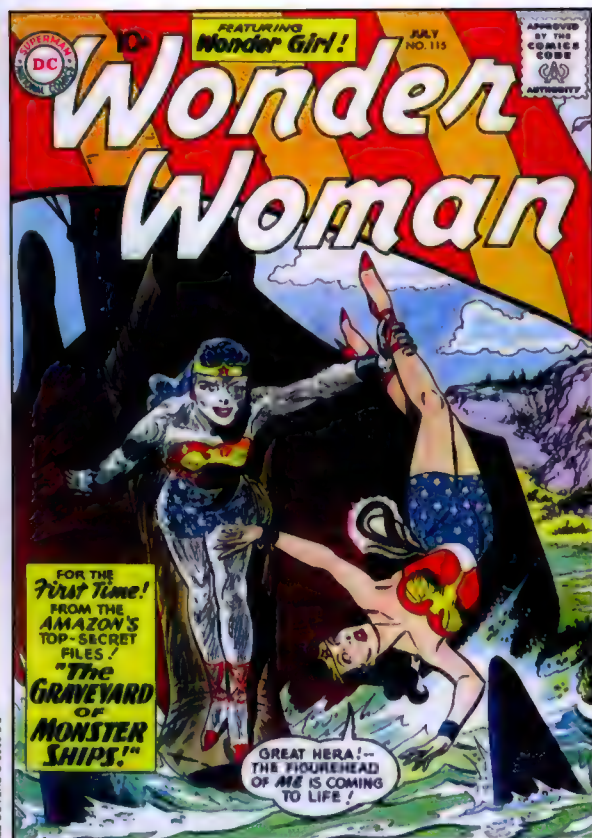




SILVER AGE WONDER WOMAN



Wonder Woman
#105
(Apr 1959),
#107
(Jul 1959),
#108
(Aug 1959),
#109
(Oct 1960)



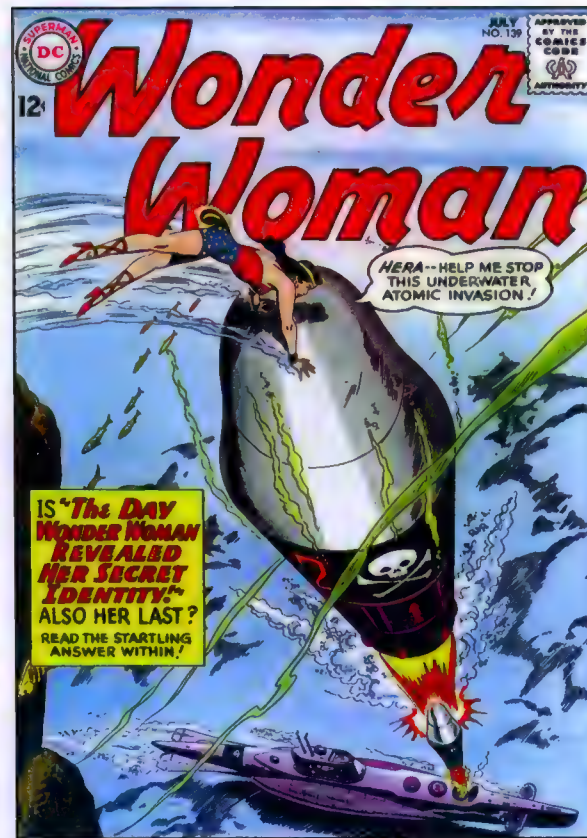
Wonder Woman
#113
(Apr 1960),
#114
(May 1960),
#115
(Jul 1969),
#117
(Oct 1960)



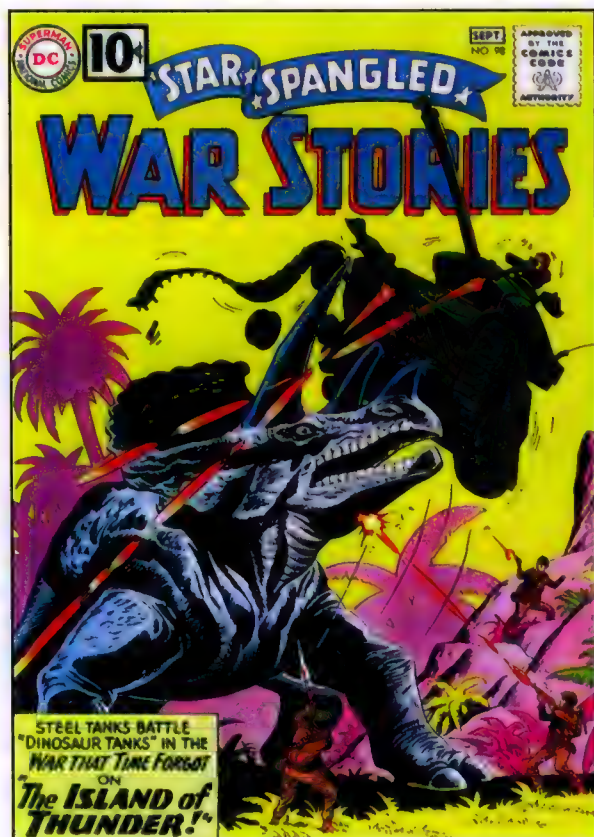
SILVER AGE WONDER WOMAN



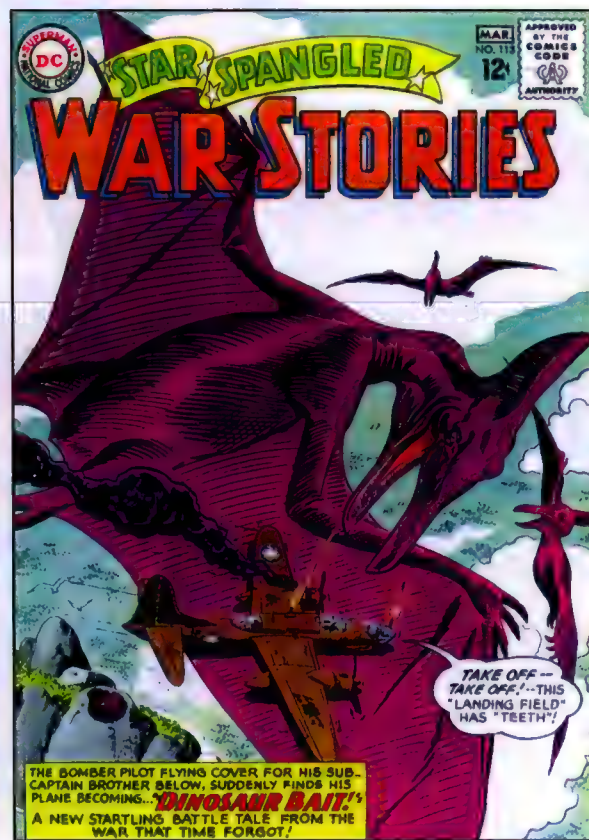
Wonder Woman
#119
(Jan 1961),
#121
(Apr 1961),
#122
(May 1961),
#123
(Jul 1961)



Wonder Woman
 #124
 (Aug 1961),
 #132
 (Aug 1962),
 #134
 (Nov 1962),
 #139
 (Jul 1963)



Star
Spangled
War Stories
#92
(Aug/Sep
1960),
#96
(Apr/May
1961),
#98
(Aug/Sep
1961),
#99
(Oct/Nov
1961)



Star Spangled
War Stories
#102
(Apr/May
1962),
#107
(Feb/Mar
1963),
#108
(Apr/May
1963),
#113
(Feb/Mar
1964)

"I take a great deal of pride
in the fact that I chose a field
that had so much public
appeal when I was only 13.
I also took pride in
telling people I am a
cartoonist. I still do."

—HS



HAL SHERMAN'S
RECOLLECTION OF
'WONDER WOMAN'
FEB 12 2000

THE WONDER WOMAN Who Was Lost!

The Hal Sherman Story BY WILL MURRAY

The history of the Golden Age of comic books is full of names without faces. One such person is Hal Sherman, best known as the originating artist of the Star Spangled Kid. But there is more to the Hal Sherman story than that brief flare of Golden Age glory. Hal Sherman recalls creating another Golden Age superhero. He called her Wonder Woman. That's right. Wonder Woman.

His arresting story follows. Harold Sherman, who was born on March 31, 1911, got into cartooning the way many in his generation did.

"I took the W. L. Evans course in cartooning when I was 13 years old," he says. "I lived in Pottstown, PA. At about the same time I became the first marble champ of Pottstown, under the name Sicherman, the family name. By dropping the 'ic' from the name, I became Sherman. I changed my name legally. I loved baseball. I was a pitcher. During a game in which I struck out eleven men in seven innings, I was offered an opportunity to play semi-pro ball. I turned it down. I was afraid of damaging my hand. Being a cartoonist was my goal and I couldn't allow anything to get in the way. I was 16 at the time."

Like many, Sherman broke into cartooning via newspaper work. First it was contest cartoons for the Publisher's Service Company. But growing impatient with the work, Sherman took a job with the



Continued on page 47

Hal Sherman writes...

February 29, 2000

Dear CBM,

After 60 years of silence, this is not an easy task.

When in December 1999, Will Murray sent me a manuscript copy of his article on my career, which you are publishing in this, I was more than pleased with it. But I was concerned how your readers would react to my claim to having created Wonder Woman.

My big concern was basically this: without some physical display of Wonder Woman drawings, would anyone reading that article believe what they were reading?

Frankly, I know less about Wonder Woman in the comics than a youngster who just bought his first copy. And for the life of me, I couldn't summon up my memories of those long-lost Wonder Woman sketches I submitted to DC Comics' Whit Ellsworth in 1940.

I discussed this with Will, and he suggested hypnosis in the hopes of dredging up some memories of Wonder Woman that I could recreate on paper. I was somewhat skeptical, as I had no experience pertaining to hypnosis. But I was willing to try.

I visited a hypnotherapist and outlined my problem: I was trying to visualize a character I created 60 years ago. This was a new one on him, but being a psychologist, he quickly understood, and in the session that followed, I made a smooth transition from his office couch to my Hollywood apartment of 1940, where I was seated at a



© 2000 HAL SHERMAN

table, with a drawing board propped up in front of me.

Our combined efforts made an attempt to recreate a female character I created 60 years back, whose likeness had completely eluded me. A character I named Wonder Woman.

The hypnotherapist suggested I relax fully, from head to toe. I did just that. I relaxed to the point where there was nothing on my mind, other than being back in my Hollywood apartment, sitting at the drawing board, sketching a female character.

But to my frustration, the memory continued to elude me. Other lost memories did flood back, but not the face of my Wonder Woman.

The hypnotherapist suggested I go home and attempt to draw the character from my subconscious. Which I did. My first sketches were crude and fumbling attempts.

After each visit, I was able to draw rough pencil sketches of Wonder Woman. But I wasn't sure what to make of them. They came straight from my subconscious, but I couldn't vouch for them because my memory still refused to open up.

When the hypnotherapy sessions finally ended, I remembered having read somewhere that a person could indulge in self-hypnosis, so I decided to continue on my own. I repeated the hypnotherapist's hypnotic chant for several days, willing my eyes to get heavy and close, and my body to relax from head to toe. In an amateurish way, it worked!

I made more sketches, then at Will Murray's suggestion, graduated to finished drawings, eventually one in color. These drawings are as close as I can come to my Wonder Woman without stating, absolutely, this is Wonder Woman. Yet I have a comfortable feeling I may have come close to duplicating my original drawings of Wonder Woman.

Summing up: To this day, I have no idea what DC Comics' Wonder Woman looked like. I never bought a copy. I never saw the TV show.

I never attempted to draw Wonder Woman through the years, because of a vow the wife and I took to keep our distance from Wonder Woman. Basically, to avoid frustration. It may sound foolish from this perspective, but being a sensitive person I distanced myself from anything having to do with Wonder Woman. (Incidentally, that vow saved us 60 years of frustration, but made it difficult to correctly determine what damage it did to me financially.)

When I returned from Hollywood, Whit Ellsworth gave me a script by Jerry Siegel called the Star-Spangled Kid, which I did to the best of my ability, until I was drafted into the Service.

I strongly feel that it was my Wonder Woman samples that prompted Ellsworth to assign the Star-Spangled Kid to me.

Less than two weeks after returning from L.A. (and now drawing the Star-Spangled Kid and sandwiched between Jerry Robinson and Mort Meskin at the Lexington Avenue DC studio), I overheard something that sounded familiar, that Whit Ellsworth and a couple of other people were discussing.

I approached Whit and said, "Whit, shouldn't I be part of this conversation?"

He brushed me off with a gruff answer. I returned to my drawing table rather upset. They were discussing Wonder Woman, two pages of the six pages I had sent to Whit Ellsworth. I made several efforts to get my samples back, but to no avail. I was quite upset. What bothered me more than anything was the fact I had no copies of the material I sent to Ellsworth.

At the time, circa 1940, we were not copy conscious. There was no Xerox on the scene as yet to remind us to copy everything. I found myself at a disadvantage... I couldn't discuss Wonder Woman with anyone.



© 2000 HAL SHERMAN



With no evidence, I would sound foolish, and I didn't like the idea of sounding foolish.

The enclosed drawings of Wonder Woman, which progress from simple pencil sketches to two fully rendered portraits, are ad-libbed from memory and are the direct result of my visits to the hypnotherapist. These visits were solely for the purpose of digging into my subconscious and plucking out the magic female I'm rightfully taking credit for creating.

I hope your readers find them interesting.

All the best,

—HAL SHERMAN

P.S. I would like to acknowledge my friend Kevin Regan, who inked my final Wonder Woman drawings for me.

Regardless of what happens as a result of articles pertaining to Wonder Woman, I am most grateful to Will Murray for his professional interest in helping me establish recognition as the creator of the original Wonder Woman.

And a big thanks to David Siegel, the "Cartoonist Collector," who triggered this search in 1998.



The Hal Sherman Story

Brooklyn Eagle drawing sports cartoons.

"I was doing fine until I was sent out to Fort Hamilton to interview a captain, a polo player. He told me he was hurt in the third 'chucker.' I had no idea what a 'chucker' was. Shortly after that assignment, I had to do a drawing of a hockey player. I was sent to a writer who would fill me in with hockey terminology. I hadn't the slightest idea what he was talking about. It was all Greek to me.

"I decided I couldn't handle this. I left the *Brooklyn Eagle* after six months, and once again, wondered what now? It had to be cartoons. I found myself in the Max Fleischer Studios, working on opaque backgrounds, for the *Popeye* and *Betty Boop* animated films they were producing."

At Fleisher's New York studios, Sherman made the acquaintance of several future comics superstars.

"I met Harry Lampert, John Stanley, and Frank Engli at Fleischer's," he recalls. "Sitting alongside of Harry on the opaque ordeal, he and I got into word games, to offset the boredom. I remember one word from that session... Nemesis."

Another person he recalls from those days was a young cartoonist and future All-American editor Sheldon Mayer, and inadvertently gives us a brief glimpse of the hidden origins of the Golden Age Flash.

"I think I met him at Fleischer. We hit up a nice relationship with Harry Lampert there. I was promoted to the inking department, where Stanley and Engli were inking on celluloids.

Frank left to assist a friend of his who just created a new comic strip—Milton Caniff with his *Terry and the Pirates*. Through Frank Engli I met Milton Caniff and Noel Sickles."

This was circa 1934.

"Sam Buchwald, manager and Max Fleischer's son-in-law, made every effort to help me as an animator. He gave me a set of 'in-between' drawings to practice on, making me eligible for the In-Between Department... a stepping stone to animation."

This was a critical time in the history of the Fleischer Studio. Still years away from relocating to Florida, and producing their classic *Superman* cartoons, it was a great place to launch a career. Had Sherman stayed, he might have been part of all that. But it was not to be.

"I never got around to practicing the in-between drawings," Sherman admits. "My interest was in doing original gag cartoons. They had to can me, and rightfully so."

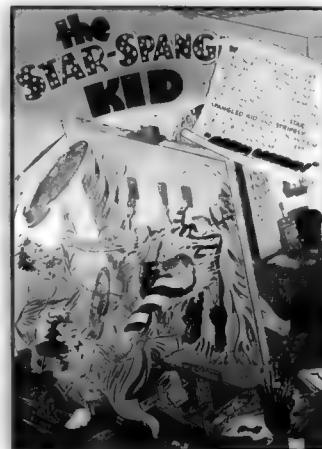
Sherman turned to freelancing gag cartoons, principally for *Boy's Life*, then drifted over to the early National Comics, still owned and operated by Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson and edited by Whitney Ellsworth.

"I never worked for Wheeler-Nicholson," Sherman remembers. "I worked for Whit Ellsworth, doing filler stuff. Might have been boxing gags. Not sure. And they could have appeared in the very first comic books."

His filler strips like "Rusty," "Blister" and "Mr. Doodle" appeared in *New Fun* and *More Fun Comics*. Some seem to be signed "Hal Shermes."

During this time, Sherman had another fateful encounter.

"Things were quite confusing. I was still looking for the proper connection in the art field. I answered an ad which took me to a midtown hotel, where I met the artist who placed the ad. The artist, sitting on the edge of the bed in a small room, was working on a comic book feature. It was Joe Shuster, working on *Superman*. He offered me \$3 a page



© 2000 DC

The Hal Sherman Story

to work with him. I turned it down. This was when I was doing fillers for Whit Ellsworth."

As the comic book field expanded into adventure strips, Sherman remained focused on his gag career.

"At the very beginning I stayed away from comic books," Sherman acknowledges. "I referred to the comic books as 'blood and thunder,' with very little appeal to me, because of my having done nothing but gag cartoons."

In September, 1940, Sherman married Ann Frum, and new horizons opened up.

"I got married and we went to Hollywood on our honeymoon," he explains. "My objective was to illustrate movie scripts, comedies, with humorous sketches, simplifying and visualizing the story, so the actors could get a clearer view of the story line. RKO thought it was a good idea. They gave me a script to work on, *Hang Out the Moon*, starring the Lane Sisters and John Payne. The material I added made the script too long. They suggested I sit in with the writers at the beginning of a new story and by doing so, my material would fit more appropriately. They'll get back to me, they said."

While waiting for the call that never came, the frustrated artist took a temporary position at Walter Lantz's studio, where he took another crack at the animation field. Once again, he found adapting to the medium difficult.

"I developed a nauseating feeling of insecurity... in part, because of the negative results at RKO and not being familiar with animation-type humor at Walt Lantz Studios, and the strain of making that transition. In the meantime, we decided Hollywood was not for us. We made plans to return to the Bronx, but not to do freelance gags. Too precarious. Now that I'm a married man, I needed more security.

"I thought of Whit Ellsworth and the comic book field. My thoughts were to do a feature. Fortunately, my wife, Ann, was working, making it possible for me to develop art work required for comic books. I spent about three months making the transition from gag cartoons to comic book art. I used Batman as my role model. I was intrigued by the rendering.

"When I felt I was ready, I did up six pages of samples. Two of the samples were Wonder Woman. The other four pages were divided—with two

Wonder Woman: THE EVIDENCE

by Will Murray

Lightning rarely strikes twice. A year or so ago, I stumbled across the story of Frank Foster and his prototypical Batman, which I covered in *CBM* #66. When I heard (via collector David Siegel) that Hal Sherman had a similar story to tell regarding his own version of Wonder Woman, I knew I had to interview him. I found Sherman to be forthright, direct, and unwilling to embellish on his admittedly-fading recollections, despite repeated pressure on my part to dig deeper into his memory. This is the mark of an honest person.

One unfortunate aspect of his remarkable tale is the absence of the kind of surviving artwork that made the Frank Foster Batman story so compelling. But we can still assess the evidence, as we have it.

The most striking thing I discovered are the close parallels in what we know of the time frame in which both Wonder Women were created.

Hal Sherman is clear that after marrying on September 22, 1940, he and his wife resettled in Hollywood. A period, he recalls, that lasted only five or six months. This would bring him back to New York in either February or March, 1941. Since we know *Star Spangled* #1 went on sale in July, that gave him only three or four months to get the first issue together—a typical production window for that time.

This means that his Wonder Woman was probably created sometime between December 1940 at the earliest... and March 1941 at the very, very latest. More than likely, she was created and submitted in the January-February window.

What Sherman did not know until I told him is that William Moulton Marston's cover letter to his initial Wonder Woman script does survive. It's dated February 23, 1941... precisely in the time frame coinciding with Sherman's own character creation. In fact, at the later end of it—suggesting that if Sherman's recollection of his Hollywood sojourn is accurate, his Wonder Woman probably predated Marston's by several weeks, if not months.

Another interesting point is that in print Marston, who died in 1947, never claimed to have brought Wonder Woman to Gaines. Instead, he repeatedly talks of urging Gaines to publish a female superhero to counterbalance what he called comics' "bloodcurdling masculinity." Gaines resisted, citing previous failures in the pulps and elsewhere to launch a woman hero. Marston persisted. Finally, Gaines agreed with the proviso that the psychologist write the character.

As Marston wrote in a 1943 issue of *The American Scholar*: "M. C. Gaines listened to our arguments for a while. Then he said, 'Well Doc, I picked Superman after every syndicate in America turned it down. I'll take a chance on your Wonder Woman, but you'll have to write the strip yourself. After six months' publication we'll submit your woman hero to a vote of our comics readers. If you don't like her, I can't do any more about it.'



A rare photo of Hal Sherman working on the *Star Spangled Kid* in May, 1942. Hal was drafted soon after it was taken.

"I wrote Wonder Woman. I found an artist—Harry Peter, an old-time cartoonist who began with Bud Fisher on the *San Francisco Chronicle* and who knows what life is all about—and with Gaines' helpful cooperation, we created the first successful woman character in comic magazines."

To which Hal Sherman responds: "That sounds very much like he got an assignment. That's the way it appears to me."

Even here, Marston doesn't explicitly claim to have created Wonder Woman by himself. Only to have put forth the notion of a female superhero and subsequently scripting her adventures with input from Gaines and Peter.

Along that line is the interesting fact that the feature's pen name, Charles Moulton, was assembled from the middle names of William Moulton Marston and Max Charles Gaines. Why include Gaines' name? If he gave Marston the concept as his own, he might have also laid claim to a co-bylone of sorts.

And there is also the bizarre fact that although *Sensation* and *Wonder Woman* comic books were published by DC, her origin appeared in *All-Star* technically an All-American title issued by a different group. To this day, Wonder Woman is perceived as a product of the All-American line largely because of Gaines' involvement, even though her adventures were published under the Superman-DC bullet.

So what to make of this jigsaw with so many phantom pieces? There are several scenarios possible. First is accidental parallelism. Certainly, with superheroes proliferating, it was inevitable that some brave publisher would attempt a distaff Superman, conventional wisdom notwithstanding.

In fact, DC itself trademarked an ashcan entitled *Superwoman*. Dated January, 1942, it shows that they were very aware of the possibilities in such a character. (Interestingly enough, a Wonder Woman ashcan was registered for trademark that same month.)

Secondly, it's possible that Gaines saw the submitted Hal Sherman Wonder Woman sketches and simply appropriated the name—a nearly perfect one—while discarding Sherman's costume design and other details. Ellsworth then had the art destroyed. The fact that Ellsworth's line of comics was technically a separate group with separate offices (although common partners) created a theoretical firewall separating the editor Sherman submitted to and the ultimate progenitor of Wonder Woman, M. C. Gaines.

Then there is the fascinating sleight-of-hand involved in Wonder Woman's unusual debut as an added signature in the back of *All-Star* #8. She appeared without prior announcement, or cover blurbing, in a magazine that did not carry features other than the issue-long Justice Society of America stories.

In a recent *Alter-Ego*, Roy Thomas theorized that the feature was premiered under those extenuating circumstances (that extra signature was expensive) to test the character before her cover premiere in *Sensation* #1 because of timidity over the audience acceptability of a female superhero. This may be so. But another possibility suggests itself.

Perhaps her origin story was jammed (and I do mean jammed since several pages were printed in text form in order to cram the tale into the maximum signature of 8 pages) into *All Star* #8 in

order to establish copyright prior to *Sensation* #1, just in case an irate artist dragged the publisher into court, even without proof of creation in artwork form.

One seeming hole in Sherman's recall is his vagueness over his first awareness of Marston's Wonder Woman, and his insistence that he never saw or read an issue of Wonder Woman despite working for her publisher during the character's formative years. He sent me his only Wonder Woman artifact from his DC days—a house ad announcing *Sensation* #1, January, 1942. On the back of this crumbling tearsheet was the final page of one of his own Star-Spangled Kid stories. A little research determined it came from *Star-Spangled Comics* #3, December, 1941. When I brought this to Sherman's attention, he said, "I'll be damned. So that's almost at the beginning. I probably clipped it and put it away for that very reason. I never really thought about it."

After the passing of nearly 60 years, this memory lapse is perfectly understandable. So is Sherman's avoidance of the character, then and now.

At the bottom of all this lies an unanswered question: was Marston's Wonder Woman identical to Sherman's unseen character of that name?

Probably not. It's highly unlikely that anyone would have dared copy the actual Hal Sherman costume design. That would have been too brazen, and invited a lawsuit, where copying the name could be dismissed as accidental. Also, had Sherman's design been copied, he would certainly have a clearer memory of his first discovery of the character's existence. Nor is it likely that the background and origin of the character are the same. The Wonder Woman we know is too specifically derived from the beliefs and philosophies of William Moulton Marston.

It is possible that Ellsworth or Gaines initially intended to call the Marston character *Superwoman*, but backed off either because the happy coincidence of Sherman's Wonder Woman concept art coming their way, or concern that Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster might object to a character called *Superwoman*.

One interesting coincidence still hangs in the air: The fact that both the Star-Spangled Kid and Wonder Woman are garbed in red, white and blue costumes. Simon and Kirby's *Captain America* debuted with a March, 1941 cover date. Its tremendous sales probably inspired that very commercial choice. Or perhaps they took their inspiration from MLJ's (Irv Novick's) *Shield*.

For Sherman's part he says of the Star-Spangled Kid's outfit, "It was out of my head, basically. I was aware of some of the things that were going on at the time. I tried to be original. I didn't copy."

As for the evidentiaryness of Hal Sherman's claims, he is the first to admit the surviving evidence is almost entirely circumstantial.

"I have no evidence," he says. "When we moved from Hollywood to New York, all correspondence between Whit Ellsworth and myself, and all of the sketches of Wonder Woman made prior to submitting the finished samples, were lost in the move. In my defense, my wife and I had gone through a deliberate process of forgetting about Wonder Woman to soften the pain of 60 years of frustration, basically because the evidence was carelessly lost at the very beginning." ■

The Hal Sherman Story



This early self portrait of Sherman was first published on playing cards

Two early Hal Sherman splash pages... one (at right) featuring the arch-villain "The Needle" the other a surreal Hitler, Tojo, & Mussolini



different characters. All the work was done with high tension, mainly because of the transition required, going from gag cartoons to comic book style."

This in 1941. The year Wonder Woman premiered in *All Star Comics* #8, December 1941. But it wasn't published until year's end. Sherman recalls creating his character named Wonder Woman near the beginning of that fateful year.

"I sent them off to Ellsworth," he adds. "He was the likeliest and only person I knew in the field. The reply from Ellsworth was most encouraging. In essence, he told me, 'First there was Bob Kane, with his fat little boys and girls, coming up with Batman... and now here's Sherman, coming up with action drawings.' He invited me back to New York, telling me he had something for me."

Unbeknownst to Sherman, Jerry Siegel had taken the train to New York City from his native Cleveland, and meeting with Ellsworth at the DC offices was told they were looking for a lead feature for a new title, *Star Spangled Comics*, scheduled for a July release. Siegel said he'd see what he could come up with, returned to his hotel room and attacked his portable typewriter.

Ellsworth was astonished when Superman's creator returned the next day with complete scripts for a new hero, appropriately entitled the Star Spangled Kid. He expected just a premise. A twist on Batman and Robin, it elevated the kid sidekick to the lead and demoted the adult to second-banana status. Boy millionaire Sylvester Pemberton teams up with ex-boxer Pat Dugan to break up a Nazi demonstration and decide to team up as the Star Spangled Kid and his beefy sidekick, Stripesy, to bat-

tle the Axis menace everywhere.

Sherman lost no time in packing and relocating east. When he returned to DC, the character was ready for him.

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"I created all the art on the Star Spangled Kid. That includes the logo and all the characters, as outlined and described by Jerry Siegel in his scripts. I used Jerry's guidance as carefully as possible, in creating the characters. I created Dr. Weerd and the Needle from Jerry's descriptions. I exaggerated Dr. Weerd's eyebrows somewhat."

The artist also remembers pitching in on the Kid's versatile super-limousine, which could fly and submerge, first seen in *Star Spangled* #2.

"I suggested various elements of that. I suggested the submarine aspect to it. Jerry Siegel liked the idea, and he incorporated it into the next script that I got. We were about ten years ahead of 007."

Sherman found an assembly-line approach to creating comic books now in place.

"DC assigned two people to assist me. One was Stan Kaye, doing the lettering and backgrounds. Lee Harris was the other guy's name. He was on the inking. He was a hell of a nice kid. He did a pretty satisfactory job. But he used a heavy brush. He did a lot of stuff there that didn't appeal to me at all. I wish the hell I could have rendered that whole thing myself, but there were publication problems. I learned quickly that was the pattern in the field. I was somewhat surprised at the young person doing the rendering on Batman, Jerry Robinson. That's the comic I used basically to guide me in my transition. I was very much impressed with the rendering. I was more impressed watching Jerry at work."

Working with the creator of Superman proved to be a long-distance experience. "I met Jerry Siegel only when he came to the city for conference with the office. He was a very pleasant person. He and Joe Shuster autographed a portrait of Superman for me, Jerry wrote: 'To Hal, my pal and collaborator.'"

It was a promising start to a stable career, but as had happened so often with Sherman in the past, a dark cloud appeared almost immediately. Sherman recalls working in the DC bullpen when it came about.

"About a week or two after starting the Star Spangled Kid, and working at my drawing table, I heard bits of conversation Ellsworth was having with a few people. Unintentionally, I overheard a few words. I heard Whit discussing one of the samples I sent. But it appeared he was discussing it with others in mind—not me. I walked over to Whit and said, 'Whit, shouldn't I be part of this conversation?' He mumbled something I didn't understand and I returned to my drawing table. What I overheard were the words, 'Wonder Woman.'"

Puzzled, Sherman focused on the work at hand.

"I was preoccupied with developing the Star Spangled Kid and the happy thought of a

bit more security it represented. I never brought this up with Whit again, but I did make an effort to get my six samples back. Obviously, I was unsuccessful. I did not make copies of the art, I was sending the material to a friend and the thought never suggested itself."

Sherman can't clearly recall when he first heard of the other Wonder Woman. Although he gave away all his comic books many years ago, he still retains to this day a single tearsheet of the DC house ad that appeared in *Star Spangled* #3. An ad that prominently displayed the cover to *Sensation Comics* #1.

Upon first seeing it, the artist felt a strange shock of recognition.

"That's where my frustration began," he says ruefully. "It lasted 60 years."

At this point, Sherman faced an excruciating choice. To complain and risk his steady employment at DC, or to let it go. He had no copies of his concept art and the letters between Ellsworth and himself were lost in the move from Hollywood.

Reluctantly, he chose the path that didn't jeopardize his security. "The stupid security was a terrible commodity," Sherman explained. "There was so damned little of it. I didn't want to rock the boat. I was doing the Star Spangled Kid and I was happy doing it. I never followed through. It was too much to take. I just walked away from it."

Sherman is hazy on how closely the character on the cover of *Sensation* #1 resembles his own lost creation.

"That's not my drawing," he affirms. "That *could* have been a takeoff of one of my Wonder Woman drawings. If you see my early Star Spangled Kid, Wonder Woman certainly would be reflected in that type of drawing. My Wonder Woman would have to have been somewhat in that style, and that's a far cry from what Peter has done."

But he admits, "I have no recollection of my Wonder Woman art. I haven't the slightest ideas what it looked like."

Pressed for details, he says, "You know that in essence is the most puzzling thing to me. If I tried to describe it, I'd be bullshitting. I'm not a bullshit artist. Her hair was dark. I have no idea what the costume was. I don't remember. It wasn't a plain dress. It was done in short briefs, and sexy."

"I do remember one page," he adds. "On one of the samples, where I had a large, magnetized gadget on a strange aircraft, lifting a huge building into the air. It's my belief Whit Ellsworth's files with my samples had the answer."

As for the origin of the magic name, Wonder Woman, Sherman explains, "Here we are on our honeymoon and I'm working for three months on the transition from gag cartoons to comic book style of art—and my bride is out working to keep everything from falling apart. Thinking of a title, the word 'wonder' kept swirling around inside my head—how wonderful can a woman be? Wonder... Wonder... Woman. I had a

title for two of the samples: Wonder Woman!"

Avoiding any contact with Wonder Woman comics, Sherman concentrated on his bread and butter, the Star Spangled Kid.

It was a fascinating time, filled with fascinating people. "Murray Boltinoff, Jack Schiff, and Mort Weisinger were the editors I came into contact with at DC. I also met Al Bester, who may have done some Star Spangled Kid scripts. But Whit Ellsworth was my major contact. Working with Whit Ellsworth was pleasant, but I got nowhere in my efforts to get back my Wonder Woman art. He brushed me off every time."

"I remember a heated phone conversation he had with Bill Finger. He was tearing Bill apart. He turned to me and said, 'How'd I do?' I didn't like it at all. Later, I asked Bill how come he had not taken more credit for developing Batman. He just mumbled."

Sherman recalls Ellsworth had a problem with his work just once.

"The wife used to take the stuff in, and turn it over to Ellsworth," he reveals. "He looked at it and wasn't happy with that particular week's drawings. He asked Ann if *she* did it. I had a terrible sinus attack and it reflected in what I was doing."

Sherman's growing circle of friends continued to widen.

"I dropped in to see Jerry Robinson and Mort Meskin, at their 52nd Street studio, when the two geniuses were turning out comic book art like they just invented it. They seemed a bit groggy, and rightfully so. They were working around the clock, beating deadlines on the material they were sweating over. I picked up one of their finished pages and didn't believe what I was looking at. I checked the copy. The copy did not bear out what I saw. You don't doubt genius when he is in the act of creation. But TWO elbows on ONE Arm? I howled. Jerry and Mort wanted to know what was so funny. I showed them. They howled. I made a phone call and left. As I closed the door, the two geniuses were still howling."



Star Spangled Comics #1 (left, Oct 1941) featured the duo's first encounter with the villainous Dr. Weerd. The covers of issue #2 (Nov 1941) and #5 (Feb 1942, above) also featured their arch-nemesis



An early photo of Hal and Ann Sherman in Yonkers, New York

The Hal Sherman Story

Sherman especially liked Meskin.

"At 480 Lexington Avenue, where we all worked together, I looked at a page Mort just completed. He signed it M-M-M-Mort... displaying his wonderful sense of humor. Mort stuttered."

Like many of his contemporaries, he was less enamored of Batman co-creator, Bob Kane.

"I ran into him one day somewhere in midtown. I was with some young lady. And along came Bob Kane. I introduced him to the girl, and the first thing you know we're hearing the life story of Bob Kane! In bull sessions, I usually walked away because I couldn't take what he was saying. He said, 'Who the hell is Milton Caniff?' And on Jerry Robinson's desk at that particular moment is a big airport layout taken from Milton Caniff! Can you imagine? He's swiping the stuff and he says, 'Who the hell is Milton Caniff?'"

One person Sherman doesn't recall was Wonder Woman's publisher, M. C. Gaines.

"I never worked with Gaines," he says flatly. "I never met him."

Sherman thinks he did come into contact with All-American editor Sheldon Mayer, however.

"If he is the person I think he is, he and I, both loaded, beat the hell out of a huge cardboard cutout of Superman during a Christmas dinner. Somebody from the inner office spiked my drink."

And he has a strong recollection of DC owner Harry Donnenfeld. "He was flirting with death one time when he gave Jack Dempsey a hot foot," Sherman chuckles. "It was at a party."

One of Harold Sherman's fellow DC artists at that time was Howard Sherman, who drew the Dr. Fate for *More Fun Comics*. Sherman dispels the notion that they were related.

"I never met Howard Sherman," he says. "Our paths may not have crossed, because after a couple of weeks of doing the Star Spangled Kid, I did my work at home."

Interesting opportunities continued to crop up. "Occasionally, I reflect on one of the brightest moments of my life, when doing the Star Spangled Kid. On leaving the office one day, I met my friend Noel Sickles, who took great pride in telling me he had just recently inked in four of the strips he was working on, in fifteen minutes. He topped that by asking me to share an office with him. I was flattered beyond words, but had to turn him down because I had just signed a lease on an apartment that was over my head. I should have begged, borrowed or stolen some money to share an office with Noel Sickles. I get sick thinking about it. Noel was working on *Scorchy Smith* at the time."

Sherman continued to draw the Star Spangled Kid until June, 1943. Suddenly, his comics career was over—for the duration.

"I left the Star Spangled Kid because Uncle Sam sent me a request to come help take care of a character named A. Hitler. All my new furniture—everything—had to go into storage."

While in the service, Sherman served as cartoonist and editor for two different Army newspapers, one in Mississippi, the other in the Azores. He continued doing cartoon features like "Post Personalities" and "War is Sure Hal"—Sherman."

When the war ended in August, discharge was supposed to follow. Not quite.

"I was sent up to Bangor, Maine, to be discharged," he notes. "Instead of the discharge, they assigned me to edit the camp newspaper. I didn't even meet the editor. He scrambled out of there in a hurry. I met a sergeant who

was supposed to help me, but he was in the midst of a fantasy. There were POWs in the camp and this sergeant must have thought he was a general. He had the POWs saluting him all day long."

Finally mustered out of the service in December, 1945, Sherman quickly returned to New York, and the familiar halls of National Comics where his Star Spangled Kid continued under new hands.

"I really thought DC would let me resume with the Star Spangled Kid. I didn't press it. I had just gone through an upsetting experience. My energy was sapped. I did some work for DC—writing and drawing Hillbilly stuff titled 'Creepy Hollow.' I never saw the material in print. I did it on my own and it was accepted. I think it was a five page story. The title of course was a takeoff on Sleepy Hollow.

"I remember Whit Ellsworth made a comment about it. He walked in when I was talking to the editor—whatever it was at that time—and looks at it. One of the gags was that one of the characters from 'Creepy Hollow' smelled so badly that he could be smelled a mile away. Whit looked at that and laughed. He thought it was funny."

Sherman's third phase at DC was destined to be brief.

"Then I went floundering out into the freelance world."

He soon found work with his friend and colleague, Bernard Bailey. Bailey was then doing the Spectre. He hired Sherman to do backgrounds on that, and other features.

"I worked with Bernard Bailey through his office," Sherman remembers. "He had an office in midtown. Whatever he was working on, I worked on backgrounds for him. He was quite happy with what I was doing. It was on and off for years."

For Bailey's *Swapper's Quarterly*, Sherman did gag cartoons. But a new problem began surfacing.

"I began to feel a strain on my hand," he explains. "My fingers seemed quite stiff. It turned out to be writer's cramp asserting itself. I had difficulty just signing my name. It sounds quite innocent, but it turned my life upside down."

It soon grew worse.

"Working on a small drawing for three days that normally would have been completed in a half hour was a sharp sign that I must drop cartooning and do something else if I was interested in paying my rent. I was very concerned about that. That, officially, was the beginning of my writer's cramp."

Disappointments continued.

"Another chap by the name of Mell Lazarus dropped in looking for work," Sherman remembers. "I had managed to develop about \$1,500 worth of fillers, my writer's cramp still raising hell with me. This young fellow agreed to do backgrounds on the drawings. But before we got into the situation, there was a change in editors and I lost the deal. All \$1,500 worth. I wonder what happened to that youngster?"

Reluctantly, Sherman tried other fields. A partnership with Jerry Robinson to produce personalized playing cards as gift items in a loft opposite Bloomingdale's materialized. They ran into trouble on the production end. The cartoon images smudged when printed.

"We had to learn how to print the card," Sherman reveals. "So Jerry visited the competitor with the ruse he was writing a college essay on unusual businesses. The writer's cramp was the main reason I got into playing cards. It was an escape for me, possibly survival. Jerry's reason? I believe he was seeking relief from deadlines."

The secret of printing playing cards was solved. But funding ran out before the business could take off. Sherman then turned to non-artistic fields, like real estate and finance. But with very mixed results. He desperately yearned to return to gag cartooning. This is what Sherman rue-

fully describes as his "Twilight Zone" period.

From time to time, he did sell gag creations like the Little Friar, Nunsense and others. With the Universal movie monster craze at its peak in 1962, Sherman came up with *Monsterville*, a *MAD*-style magazine chock full of monster gags panels and strips, all written and created by the artist himself.

"For *Monsterville*, I had made arrangements with the editor to use a prisma pencil and wash—rather than pen and ink. The Offset process of course allowed for that treatment. It was the *only* way I could render the drawings, although the editor did not know that. It was my secret. The prisma pencil allowed me to control my hand. But sitting at the editor's desk at contract time made me jittery. I was afraid that if he saw my hand quaking while signing the contract, he would wonder about my confidence and hence my ability to do the work I had contracted for.

"My problem was that I couldn't even use a pen to sign my own name. The pressure—to control my hand—invariably broke the pen point. Fortunately, he was distracted by something and turned away from me and I quickly scrawled my name on the contract. The butterflies in my stomach immediately took off on vacation."

This was followed by paperback gag collections like *Fishing for Laughs*, *Nude-Niks*, and *Alley Whoops!* Over the years, Sherman continued to pop in and out of the comic book field.

"Sid Jacobson, at Harvey Publications, had been buying gag cartoons from me, and at one point asked me to pencil stories for others to ink. My hand collapsed again while blocking out the pages. Because of my writer's cramp, Sid switched me from blocking out, penciling Spooky and other characters, to writing the stories. But I still had to rough out the stories in picture form. Sid showed me a great deal of compassion, making the ordeal less painful.

"Sid, as a songwriter wrote the lyrics of 'Chances Are,' for the popular singer, Johnny Mathis."

Sherman recalls working on the Harvey characters Casper, Wendy, and Richie Rich for about a year in the 1960s or '70s.

"I met George Wolf at *Colliers*." He said, 'You know, Hal, you've been in and out of this field more times than I've been in!' which typified my ins and outs of the business."

Around this time, an answer to his drawing problem seemed to appear.

"A chiropractor finally discovered that it was a pinched nerve in my neck that was causing the writer's cramp, causing stiffness in my fingers, removing all flexibility. Great! Now all the doctors have to do is cure the pinched nerve in my neck. They threw up their hands when I pointed out what the problem was. I even suggested surgery. They just looked at me."

A breakthrough finally came out of a tragic mishap.

"During her first hip fracture 10-12 years ago, Ann required a therapist to show her how to use her limbs again," Sherman explains. "I asked the therapist if she could help, do something about my writer's cramp. She couldn't, but she told me about a Hand Rehabilitation Center in White Plains, a half hour away. I didn't lose any time getting there. They put me through a series of tests... follow lines drawn in red—now follow in black. My hand wobbled all over the place. They finally wrapped something around my wrist. This time I managed to follow the lines fairly well.

"I then scribbled a cartoon and followed the lines I drew. I let out a scream. They came flying to my table wondering what was wrong. I told them I just did something I could not do for the last 40 years. My lines were perfect on the small cartoon. I've been wearing a wrist band ever since. Works great. What I'm POed about is the fact not one of the dozen doctors I visited during these years ever suggested anything so simple. I could have bought this brace in the pharmacy years ago!"

These days, Hal Sherman still draws, and is even experimenting with a new comic book character, at which he will only hint at. He looks back on his roller coaster career with understandably extreme emotions.

"I take a great deal of pride in the fact that I chose a field that had so much public appeal when I was only 13. I also took pride in telling people I am a cartoonist. I still do. The reaction is always a good one. I discovered

people have a great deal of respect for cartoonists. But in my case... with a writer's cramp that knocked me out of the field for so many years and robbed me of so many years of development... how can I claim to be a cartoonist?

"But when I refer to the Star Spangled Kid, eyebrows shoot up. A very good feeling."

As for the lost Wonder Woman...

"I get a great deal of satisfaction out of knowing that something I created has been so well accepted by the public. At the same time, devastated. Devastated, because I could not make any claim to creating Wonder Woman. I felt like a million dollars that it had registered so well, but no way in the world could I ever talk about it. Quite conscious of the fact that I'd sound ridiculous, taking claim to creating this outstanding character, with no evidence to back me up. I made every effort to subdue my frustration.

Ann and I never discussed Wonder Woman. The frustration was a killer. It still is."

Sherman maintained a steadfast silence over the Wonder Woman issue until recently, when collector-fan David Siegel came into his life.

"It was David Siegel's interest and persistence that revived my interest in Wonder Woman, enough to check into histories of the comics and see who has been given credit for creating Wonder Woman. It seemed to point to William Moulton Marston, the inventor of the lie detector. I was not at all convinced with the approach that was made to name Marston as the creator of Wonder Woman. It seems contrived... a justification."

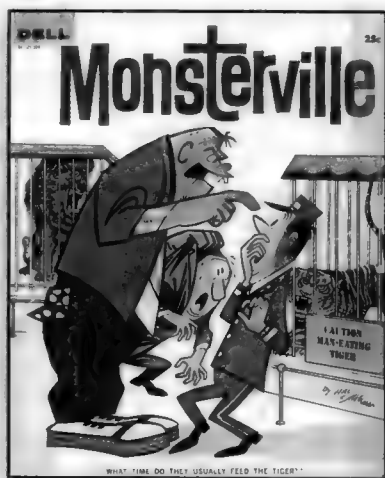
And Sherman has his own theory as to what may have happened. "My reasoning tells me that Whit Ellsworth, whom I sent my Wonder Woman and other samples to, placed them with Max Gaines and he in turn brought in Marston, a psychologist, to develop the scripts. It is my belief he was given credit for creating Wonder Woman from that point of view.

"H.G. Peter created the art work," Sherman adds. "I do not know his work. To this day, I have not seen a *Wonder Woman* comic book. I never saw the *Wonder Woman* TV show. My wife and I became aware of Lynda Carter via the commercial she did for contact lens. The commercial was blackened out in a hurry. Neither the wife nor I could take any reminders of the Wonder Woman situation."

Not that Sherman is bitter. He is not.

"This final word about Wonder Woman," he says. "That wonderful, accident-prone, hard-of-hearing woman, Ann Sherman, and I just celebrated our 59th wedding anniversary. It was, and still is, Ann's sense of humor—a real shock absorber—that helped weather all the storms we encountered along the way."

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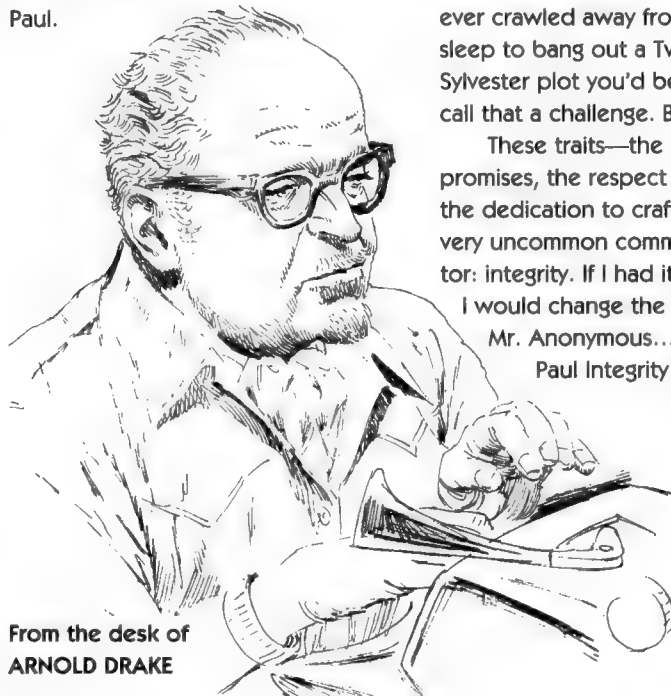
A TRIBUTE TO MR. ANONYMOUS!

By Arnold Drake

For the first 25 years of his comic book writing career he got not one published credit. Then Mr. Anonymous gained both a name and fame: someone discovered that one Paul S. Newman had written over 4,000 published stories. *The Guinness Book of Records* crowned him King of Comic Book Writers. Having written half that many stories myself, I'm particularly amazed at his record. But it is too easy to lose the man in the numbers. And Paul deserves more than that.

When we two labored in the vineyards of Gold Key and DC and Marvel, I knew him as a man who never missed a deadline. Sure, never missing a deadline can be a Teutonic obsession with tidiness. But I think Paul saw a deadline as a promise. I've broken a few such promises. But not Paul.

I never heard him raise his voice in dealing with editors. Those same editors often caused the rest of us to howl like banshees on a bad hair day. But not Paul.



From the desk of
ARNOLD DRAKE

He was a master researcher. To write *The Lone Ranger*, *Turok*, and *Prince Valiant*, this New York Jewish boy became a minor authority on American Indian folklore, prehistoric animal life, and the rites and rituals of feudal knights. Most of us dipped only one toe in the research waters. But not Paul.



Mr. Anonymous... PAUL S. NEWMAN

His dedication to craft was almost palpable. Every storyline (all 4,000!) was a challenge. Now if you ever crawled away from a bad night's sleep to bang out a Tweety & Sylvester plot you'd be hard put to call that a challenge. But not Paul.

These traits—the unbroken promises, the respect for his readers, the dedication to craft—have one very uncommon common denominator: integrity. If I had it in my power, I would change the middle initial of Mr. Anonymous... he would be, Paul Integrity Newman. ■

HIGH-GRADE HORROR COLLECTION FOUND

NEW YORK - Earlier this year, Stephen Fishler and Vincent Zurzolo, Jr. (owners of Metropolis Collectibles) discovered a collection of 1,500 high grade horror comics in Northford, Connecticut. The comics were purchased for an undisclosed six-figure sum and have been dubbed "The Northford Collection."

Titles in the collection included *Beware*, *Dark Mysteries*, *Fantastic Fears*, *Ghost*, *Horrific*, *Marvel Tales*, *Out Of The Shadows*, *Startling Terror Tales*, *The Thing*, *Voodoo*, *Weird Horrors*, *Weird Terrors*, *Worlds Of Fear*, and many others.

Continuous runs included *Adventures Into Weird Worlds* #1-30, *Adventures Into The Unknown* #1-67, *Forbidden Worlds* #1-40, *Haunted Thrills* #1-18, *House Of Mystery* #1-39 (some of the later numbers considered rare), *Mysterious Adventures* #1-25, *Spellbound* #1-25, *Strange Tales* #1-40, *Tales Of Horror* #1-13, and *Web Of Mystery* #1-25.

Vincent Zurzolo noted "Approximately 90% of the comics in the Northford Collection can be identified by an 'x' stamp on the back cover and the average grade of the collection is Very Fine+."

The books have been selling rapidly due to the present intense demand for high grade pre-Code horror and the market perception that books of this genre and era are still generally undervalued.



Metropolis Collectibles can be contacted at 800-229-6387.

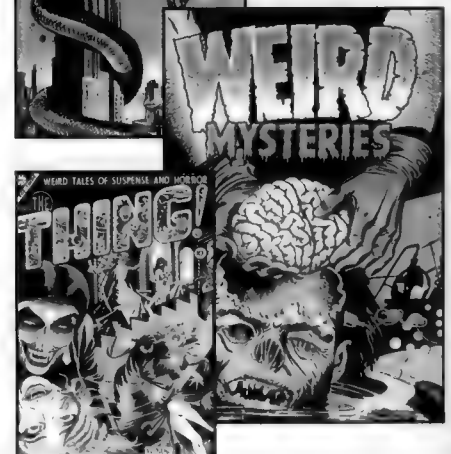


Photo-Journals!!

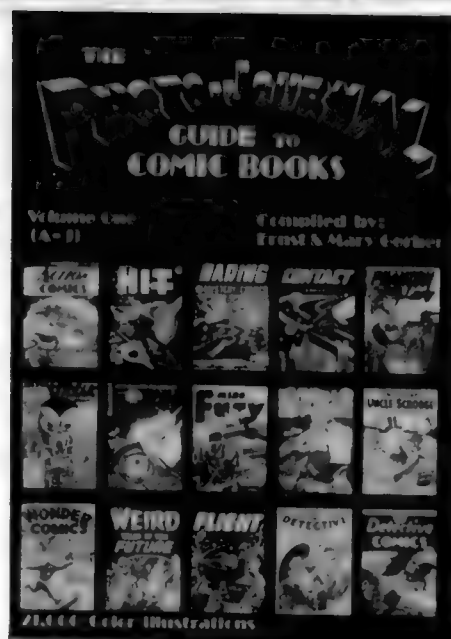
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What is pedigree quality?

By now everyone has the new Price Guide and has probably thumbed through it looking for price changes in their favorite books. Some improvements have been made and of course, there's still room for improvement. On the positive side, the giveaway section is a useful breakout from the body of listings. On the negative side, the graphics used in the "EC & Beyond" article were tough to read. I for one can't read white print on a "shouting red" background.

There appears to be new grading definitions, one which particularly yanks my chain... VF/NM being represented in the NM tier as a NM grade at 9.0. This misrepresentation is a real concern. Now is not the time to debate my abhorrence of VF/NM being a 9.0... that's for another day! However the very short definition of this new "price-padding" grade is even worse. "A comic book has enough positive qualities to make it better than a VF+, but has enough detracting qualities to keep it from being a NM-. In most cases the comic book has a better appearance than a VF+."

Huh? Okay, we know what VF/NM is NOT! I'd call this a negative description at best and a vague and nebulous at the worst. So what IS VF/NM? For additional confusion, the article on grading starts out referring to the Carter/Overstreet Grading Guide for "more detailed information." A quick check of that 1992 book indicates that it uses a different numeric grading scale. This is a confusing double message to say the least.

Reports have been received that 400,000 orders were received in the first 24 hours after Stephen King's electronic novella, "Riding the Bullet," became available on various retailer's websites. Readers overwhelmed the sites with orders to download the digital horror story.

The novella, the equivalent to 66 written pages, was given away on the first day by some booksellers to nurture the infant market, but others were getting \$2.50 a copy. The 400,000 figure includ-

ed both the paid and the free downloads, but even factoring in the free copies, the enormous first day demand has markedly raised the profile of electronic books.

I think it's time to make the Price Guide available the same way. Think of the possibilities... one could download a company, a genre, or specific title... customizing the sort to the needs of your specific collection. Plus you get your Guide on a CD. Not only that, but updates, recent sales data, and hobby news could be communicated via the Guide website. Real time updates are what's needed, and the disadvantages of the "once a year" approach could be greatly ameliorated. The phrase "those who choose not to look ahead will soon get left behind" comes to mind.

No look at the Guide would be complete without my "self-interested and biased" view on Duck books! May I quote from page 67 "However, the king of the slow sellers has to be '50s Dell Funny animals (Uncle Scrooge, Donald Duck, WDC&S, Looney Tunes)."

Oh, so? My personal experience indicates that these books move very well if you have foreign clients AND do not charge over Guide prices. Once again certain key issues have reported record prices (again). While I may sound like a broken record (and I'm sure a few of you East Coast anti-duck types would love to break one over my noggin... hey, remember vinyl?) need I point out the remarkable sales of Scrooge #179 and WDC&S #480 that have occurred within the past few months? There have been three VF/NM sales of #179 at over \$1,000; a FN sale at \$456 (13X Guide) and the #480 for over 4X Guide.

Traditionally copies of WDC&S under #50 sell briskly, along with the Firestone giveaways and the Barks March of Comics issues. Better than average condition early issues of Mickey Mouse Magazine are also quick sells.

And when it comes to quick and furious sellers, it's no secret (Cont. on page 62)

MARKET REPORTS



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ComicLink brokered in excess of \$200,000 worth of early Kirby and Ditko Silver Age original art from the Tony Christopher collection in the month of March. Some of the specific items: splash pages from Amazing Spider-Man #8 and #12, the entire Avengers #5 book (excluding the cover), and the entire 13-page Thor story from Journey Into Mystery #84.

Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #6 NM+ (CGC 9.6) \$3,600; #33 NM \$310; #46 NM/NM+ \$200; Batman #100 VG \$400; Daredevil #1 FN+ \$475; Haunt of Fear #15 (#1) VG \$420; Human Torch #1 AppVF+ (restored, marred centerfold) \$3,300; Incredible Hulk #1 AppVF (restored) \$1575; #2 (VF/NM 9.0) \$2,500; #181 NM (CGC 9.4) \$675; MAD #4 NM/MT (Spokane copy) \$2,200; Showcase #24 FN/VF (CGC 7.0) \$500; Superman #17 appVG/FN (Hitler cover, restored) \$290.

The market for original art and high grade comic books is extremely robust at present. The future looks very good for the comic book industry as sales are continually increasing and prices on quality material have been rising.

GREG WHITE • COMICS & COLLECTIBLES

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Another industry fad had me laughing this week. I was offered a high grade key 1950's DC Silver Age comic that had been professionally graded by a new company offering such ser-

(Continued on page 58)

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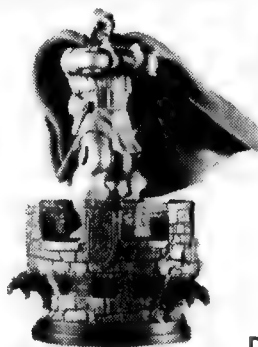


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MARKET REPORTS

vices. The collector needed funds and decided to sell this comic. The problem was that the book had been encased and sealed and I was told that I could not break the seal and inspect the comic unless I agreed to purchase the comic prior to opening the case.

I explained to the collector that I could not

make a final decision until I inspected the entire book. He was adamant and would not allow inspection without my guarantee of a sale. I passed on this issue. I cannot picture many serious collectors (the key word here is collector as opposed to investor/speculator) spending sizable amounts without inspecting the entire book.

We have had a quite month at the retail level. Not that many collectors visit the store

anymore. They prefer to purchase via the computer. Although I am not a 'mint' freak, I still much prefer to see books in person that I am considering buying.

Many collectors today fill their needs month by month over the Internet and do not feel compelled to visit their local shop (this only applies if the local shop still promotes the sales on pre-1975 comic books) or comic convention. Over the counter traffic is diminishing.

◆◆ CBM MarketWatch ◆◆

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action

#443 NM.....\$13.....59%

Adventure

#304 VF.....\$25.....45%

#320 VF.....\$32.....90%

#289 FN.....\$17.....53%

#431 NM.....\$20.....53%

All Flash

#1 VG.....\$875.....36%

#2 VG.....\$215.....34%

#13 VG.....\$115.....68%

#14 VG.....\$80.....41%

All-American

#71 VG+.....\$130.....97%

Amazing Spider-Man

#17 VG.....\$50.....51%

#21 VG.....\$33.....33%

#47 NM.....\$103.....1.08X

#51 VG.....\$22.....71%

#52 VG.....\$15.....1.07X

#126 NM.....\$23.....92%

Atom

#18 NM.....\$35.....70%

Avengers

#23 NM.....\$56.....1.4X

#27 NM.....\$40.....Guide

Batman

#1 FN.....\$10355.....64%

#27 VG.....\$160.....44%

#39 VG.....\$175.....85%

#41 VF.....\$449.....1.05X

#69 FN.....\$177.....89%

#83 VG.....\$160.....1.43X

#139 VG+.....\$42.....88%

#171 GD.....\$30.....83%

#240 FN.....\$8.....1.06X

#241 FN.....\$10.....1.3X

Brave and Bold

#44 VF.....\$130.....83%

#51 VF.....\$118.....82%

Beyond

#22 GD.....\$13.....1.13X

Captain America

#33 VG.....\$415.....1.22X

#100 FN+.....\$75.....1.25X

Comic Cavalcade

#11 GD.....\$110.....1.26X

CrimeSustenStories

#3 VF.....\$200.....95%

Detective

#439 NM.....\$20.....59%

#441 NM.....\$25.....74%

#445 NM.....\$25.....74%

Fantastic Four

#4 NM.....\$3500.....1.25X

#25 FN+.....\$92.....88%

#30 VG.....\$10.....45%

#50 FN+.....\$75.....93%

#106 NM.....\$15.....83%

#108 NM.....\$19.....1.05X

#110 NM.....\$18.....Guide

Fantastic Four Annual

#1 NM+.....\$1125.....1.73X

Flash (SA)

#109 GD.....\$25.....61%

#162 NM.....\$31.....50%

Forever People

#1 FN.....\$13.....1.08X

Frontline Combat

#6 FR.....\$6.5.....2X

#11 FR.....\$6.....3X

Green Lantern

#33 NM.....\$46.....51%

#42 NM.....\$83.....1.19X

#60 NM.....\$28.....80%

Hawk & Dove

#4 NM.....\$35.....88%

House of Mystery

#178 VF.....\$23.....92%

HR Puf N Stuf

#1 NM.....\$99.....50%

Hulk

#6 VG.....\$250.....1.25X

#109 NM.....\$25.....66%

Iron Man

#1 VG.....\$54.....87%

Jerry Lewis

#66 FN.....\$10.....87%

Journey Into Mystery

#98 VG.....\$22.....92%

#110 FN.....\$24.....Guide

#111 FN.....\$21.....Guide

Jimmy Olsen

#52 VG+.....\$16.....1.33X

Jingle Jangle

#7 FN.....\$35.....81%

#20 VF.....\$50.....1.11X

JLA

#15 NM.....\$125.....69%

#25 NM.....\$70.....66%

Jumbo

#40 VG.....\$97.....1.03X

#99 VG+.....\$50.....1.25X

#159 VG.....\$45.....1.60X

Mad

#4 GD.....\$68.....90%

My Greatest Adventure

#82 FN.....\$20.....44%

#84 F.....\$20.....44%

Mod Wheels

#1 NM.....\$10.....41%

Phantom Stranger

#1 FN.....\$13.....54%

Plastic Man

#13 VG.....\$85.....85%

Pogo

#2 VF.....\$200.....75%

Real Fact

#1 GD.....\$45.....80%

Rifleman

#3 VF.....\$25.....31%

Secret Hearts

#87 VG.....\$17.5.....3.5X

Sgt Fury

#12 VF.....\$42.....1.17X

#18 VF.....\$30.....85%

#25 VF.....\$23.....88%

Showcase

#35 FN.....\$100.....55%

Showgirls

#1 FN.....\$55.....1.66

Silver Surfer

#4 NM.....\$280.....64%

#10 NM.....\$57.....88%

#11 NM.....\$30.....60%

#12 NM.....\$40.....80%

#16 NM.....\$75.....1.5X

#17 NM.....\$47.....94%

Strange Adventures

#106 GD.....\$10.....1.05X

#110 FN.....\$10.....35%

#213 VF.....\$13.....52%

Strange Tales

#7 FR.....\$29.....2.9X

#23 FR.....\$13.....2X%

Superboy

#30 FN.....\$130.....1.12X

#40 GD.....\$40.....2X

#43 GD.....\$20.....Guide

Superman

#25 GD.....\$112.....91%

#40 GD.....\$88.....90%

#225 NM.....\$17.....65%

Tales from the Crypt

#20 VG.....\$250.....1.25X

#21 VG+.....\$200.....1.19X

Tales of Suspense

#8 FN.....\$90.....96%

#48 VF.....\$145.....96%

#50 FN+.....\$30.....78%

Tales to Astonish

#64 VF.....\$30.....92%

#66 FN+.....\$12.....80%

The Thing

#12 VG+.....\$350.....2.24X

Thor

#127 VF.....\$20.....69%

#134 VF.....\$29.....82%

Thun'da

#1 FN.....\$700.....2.07X

Vault of Horror

#20 VF.....\$175.....95%

WDC&S

#22 VG.....\$154.....1.71X

Wonder

#13 GD.....\$43.....80%

Wonder Woman

#5 VF.....\$650.....76%

#104 FN.....\$200.....5X

#112 FN.....\$36.....1.13X

#178 VF.....\$20.....Guide

World's Finest

#2 GD.....\$435.....1.08X

#28 VG.....\$99.....61%

#70 FN.....\$640.....4.26X

X-Men

#2 VG.....\$266.....94%

#4 VG.....\$100.....Guide

#4 VG.....\$112.....1.12X

#7 FN.....\$109.....1.21X

#8 VG.....\$80.....1.33

#10 FN.....\$90.....Guide

#11 VG.....\$49.....Guide

#22 VG.....\$20.....Guide

#29 VG.....\$20.....Guide

#58 FN.....\$27.....Guide

#94 VF+.....\$375.....1.35X

Young Love

#121 NM.....\$9.....36%

Young Men

#10 FN.....\$35.....1.16X

The future will be a greater challenge.

Silver Age 1955-1969 - Not many sales this month. We bought a collection of Archies. Not much else came in. Low-mid grade continues to move best. High grade is nice but many of my customers just cannot afford them.

Silver Age Sales: Spider-Man 14 VG \$200; Iron Man #1 VF/NM \$250; X-Men #4 VG \$50.

Golden Age 1935-1955 - A nice group of two dozen Timelys came in last week.

Collections like this are the reason I am still here. What a breath of fresh air compared to the stuff that dominates the hobby today. Timelys and comparable books will always brighten my day! I have three major shows this spring/summer and these will help flush out my selection. Many GA books just won't sell at Overstreet. This is an old problem. When is the last time you were able to get full Guide across the board on a dozen or so comics from this period?

Golden Age Sales: Batman #4 VG \$900; Jingle Jangle #1 VF \$140; March of Comics #3 FR \$35; Marvel Mystery #57 VG \$175.

Art and Toys - A quite month... once again most activity takes place on the Internet. I haven't seen a vintage group of art offered to the store for quite a while. Like everyone, I would purchase most any pre-1970 piece that came in. Hopefully we will get a hit soon. I did buy a nice set of vintage Matchbox cars all in their little yellow boxes. I also purchased a neat group of 78 RPM records that includes many '50's rock & roll discs.

Art & Toy Sales: Batman Aurora model in box \$200, Capt Action loose Superman uniform \$150, Matchbox Greyhound bus in box \$25, Ballo animation drawing \$25.

I head to Europe for shows next month and will include that in my next report.

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It's been a very busy period for us over Christmas and New Year and the first couple of months of 2000. Sales of vintage comics from all periods have been buoyant, whether at our shop, at shows, by eBay, or from our mail order catalogue. We were lucky enough

recently to acquire a few dozen pre-Code horror books which have been moving very nicely for us. Sales have also been good on Fiction House & Fox and 1950s sf and jungle are popular too. A great many oddball items have been surfacing, as well as some obscure Bronze Age material which can be rare over here. Sales on Silver Age DC and Marvel remain the steady backbone of our business.

Golden Age/1950s Sales: Action #242 FN+ \$480, #262 VG+ \$28; Baffling Mysteries #17 GD- \$21; Chamber of Chills #20 FN+ \$110; Comic Cavalcade #20 VG+ \$213; Danger #11 FA/GD \$8; Jimmy Olsen #1 GD/VG \$405, #14 VG/FN \$74; Jo-Jo #14 G/VG \$76, #26 GD/VG \$51; Jumbo #124 VG+ \$38, #125 VG \$34; Mystery Tales #11 FR/GD \$26; Planet #59 VG \$100; Red Mask #47 VG/FN \$48; Sensation #85 FN- \$60; Space Adventures #1 VG- \$123; Startling Terror Tales #5 GD- \$34; Strange Adventures #96 VG+ \$37; Superman #48 FN \$150; Tomb Of Terror #9 FN- \$72; True To Life Romances #12 VG+ \$30; Voodoo #12 FA \$15; Web of Evil #11 FA/GD \$21.

Silver/Bronze Age Sales: Detective #395 NM \$27, FF #17 VG \$62; Ghost Rider #1 (1970s) VF \$48; Great Action #9 VG/FN \$40; Jimmy Olsen #63 VF+ \$40; Journey Into Mystery #83 PR/FA \$80; Lois Lane #7 GD \$34, #13 VG- \$37; Sub-Mariner #1 VF \$64; Tales of Voodoo (Mag) V1 #11 VF- \$23, V3 #6 VF \$16; Whammo Giant Comics #1 GD \$40; Wonder Woman #115 VF- \$55, #121 VF- \$42; X-Men #14 VG+ \$67, #27 VG/FN \$30, #94 VF- \$288.

TED VAN LIEW • SUPERWORLD

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This is as strong as the marketplace has been in years! We're finding that almost any books from all eras are selling briskly, especially if high grade or relatively scarce. The Silver Age still leads the way, probably because so many of us grew up with these books, and want to concentrate on re-acquiring them. Golden Age sells great, but is much harder to find in any quantity. I have been seeing a resurgence of interest in the bigger ticket items which had been slow for some time. People have more disposable income these days, isn't that a lovely thing!

We're encountering more international buyers, which is great as far as I'm concerned.

Any broadening of our marketplace is welcomed! Books from the 1970s continue to pick up. The people who collected during the era when these were published are coming of age now, so expect to see sensational growth in this area. Seems Tony Starks was right all along. Who coulda known?

The biggest recent development in the hobby is the advent of the CGC (Comics Guarantee Corp.). They are certifying books, and the marketplace has already seen the effects a bit. My feeling is that the grading service will mainly affect the high end, high grade market, and that the rest of the books will be pretty much unaffected.

Lastly, the convention scene has livened up substantially in the last year. There was a while where attendance seemed to be a bit down, and enthusiasm wasn't at the level it should be. That has turned around big time! We recently returned from Motor City's Chicago Con and Big Apple in NYC, and couldn't keep up with all the people who wanted our attention and books.

Recent Sales: All-Star #19 VG+ (WP) \$450; Amazing Spider-Man #21 NM- \$325, #31, #35 VF/NM \$150@; Batman #244 NM \$38; DC 100 Pg Giant #4 VF/NM \$225; Crack #20 VG \$155; JIM #115 NM- \$115; X-Men #19 NM- \$125, #94 NM- \$475; G.S. #1 VF/NM 9.0 (certified) \$680; Son Of Sinbad #1 VF+ \$450; Wonder Woman #50 FN (WP) \$145; Weird Mysteries #2 VG \$295.

JAMIE NEWBOLD/GINO STRAGUSA

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Business is up. Back issue sales continue to dominate our activity. EBay is more work and less profit compared to our store and website activity. We are in a boom period for comic book purchasing. Recently, we have become inundated with Silver and Bronze Age purchases. The purchases, all originating from Southern California, include multiples of common and even key '60's and '70's comics. Although nothing approaching a collection we'd attempt to call pedigree, we have picked up a substantial amount of NM/NM-comics.

Complimenting these purchases, we have observed more back issue customers contact-

The convention season is upon us and collectors are gearing up to find that one-of-a-kind special book.

Golden Age: Again, the selling prices of low grade Timely books continue to astound everyone... with most bringing multiples of Guide. Are they really that much more difficult to find than contemporaneous low grade DC books? (There certainly seems to be plenty lower and mid-grade DC Golden Age, and they aren't bringing anywhere near the "Timely Premium." Alas, high grade Timely has been moving steadily upwards and has been almost impossible to find during the last five months.

Golden Age Sales: All Winners #3 GD-\$200; Amazing Comics #1 AppVF+\$1,280; Batman #2 AppVF \$3,900; Fawcett's Funny Animals #15 GD \$21; Flash #104 GD \$475; Jungle #4 FN \$295; Special Edition #4 GD \$110; Sub-Mariner #2 FR \$310. #11 FR/GD \$170.

Atom Age Sales: Curly Kayoe #1 VF+ \$140; Dagar #19 VF/NM \$450; Famous Crimes #4 VF/NM \$220; Fox Giant Exciting Romance Stories VF \$390; Junior Comics #11 VF+ \$850; Love and

Silver Age: A few high grade collections have surfaced lately and have been very quickly absorbed. Mid-grade is bringing a higher percentage on eBay and even low grade Silver is finding a home there. None of this could be said two years ago and is, I believe, an important indicator of where the market is heading.

Silver Age Sales: Action #360 MT \$85; Amazing Spider-Man #1 VG \$1,700, #26 NM \$225; Batman #189 VF \$35; Brave & Bold #52 VF \$190; Captain America #100 NM- \$380; Daredevil #1 VF \$650; Hulk #6 GD \$138; Iron Man #1 NM \$375; JLA #65 NM \$28; Journey Into Mystery #124 NM \$82; Showcase #22 GD \$250; Strange Tales #135 VF/NM \$88.

Bronze Age: A great many longtime dealers have long ignored servicing this segment of the hobby and are just now getting up to speed with this material. Many books that they previously declined to buy are now being placed in inventories. Considering that 1970's books are 20 to 30 years old now, this can only be good for Bronze Age collectors and investors. The 48/52 page DC horror titles continues to outpace the pack, with Marvel horror reprints and Charlton Romance running a close second. Also, high grade X-Men reprints (from #67-93) are in great demand.

Bronze Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #136 NM \$44; First Issue Special #5 VF/NM \$14; House of Secrets #93 NM \$28; #98 MT \$22; Luke Cage #1 GD \$9; Marvel Spotlight #3 MT \$45; Marvel Super Heroes Giant Size #1 VF/NM \$24; Special Marvel Edition #15 NM \$37; Strange Sport Stories #1 VF/NM \$16; Tomb of Dracula #2 MT \$38; Warlord #1 NM \$20; X-Men Comics #73 NM+ \$36, #69 NM+ \$38. 

Our Internet market does not give us the demographics to correctly identify the ages of our unseen customers. Based upon our store and convention customers we can only assume that the back issue market is still firmly locked into the hands of males (and some women) in their 20s to mid-40s. More 1970's kids are returning to the comic book market to buy Bronze and Silver Marvel and DC gems.

Golden Age Sales: John Wayne Adventure #1 GD/VG \$225; Jumbo Comics #118 VG \$24; MAD #14 VG \$85; Planet #54 VG \$75, #59 VG \$100.

Silver Age Sales: Avengers #1 VG \$300, #2 FN \$160, #4 FN \$337, #5 VG+ \$55; Dark Mansion Of Forbidden Love #2 FN/VF \$20; Iron Man #1 FN \$1 VF \$50.

BILL PONSETI

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As I sit here pouring over the ever-growing holes in my want list, I am left to ponder... what is going to happen next in the market? What previously under-appreciated sector of the comics market will be the next to rise dramatically in price and demand?

What brought me to this crossroads is a phenomena that has been all too prevalent in this industry for the past ten years. How many of you have decided, on a lark, to start collecting a new genre of comics that looked affordable and fun, only to find out that you weren't the only one having this thought? It certainly has happened to me. First, back in the early eighties with Nedor's, then in the early nineties with the Hero-revival Atlas issues, then in the mid-nineties with Cheslers, and now most recently with Marvel Westerns.

Yes, you read this right... Marvel Westerns! Over my thirty-plus years of collecting comics I have amassed, sold, and re-amassed run after run, and publisher after publisher. But occa-

sionally I'll stumble across a book from a run I never considered collecting and decide "Hey these are cool. I'll collect these." Thus is the nature of my addiction. Now begins the frantic hoarding and desire to covet, beyond the dreams of Avarice. But sure as I'm sitting here, many other folks are doing the same thing... trying to find something fun to collect, that they won't go broke doing it! Scratch Marvel Westerns off that list!

Most of my collecting and selling these days takes place on the Internet, so I'll use that model to illustrate my point. A Rawhide Kid #17, first Kirby issue, origin retold, became the focus of my attack on eBay recently. I entered into a bidding war on this book (which was only a GD+, I hasten to add) and crawled away the loser after a furious bidding battle that left me spent. The book sold for an incredible 8.5 times graded Guide!! 8.5!!!! If Bob O is reading this he must be scratching his head too! I guess I'll just have to live without that issue... but wait.. there is another, lower grade copy on Ebay now, here we go again! Maybe I'll try my hand at Original Comic Art again!

Recent Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #1 VG+ \$2,000; Amazing World of DC Comics entire run VF+ \$175; Flash #10 FR/GD \$175; Green Lantern Comics # 7 GD+ \$200; Journey Into Mystery #83 GD- \$250. Lot of mid grade Thor and Journey into Mysteries (10 issues) \$200.

..... MATT NELSON • COMIC CONSERVATION

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Sales continue to be strong on eBay for most comics 1933-1960s, as long as they're graded somewhere within the realm of reality and a nice scan accompanies the listing. There is certainly more material up for auction than ever before. The Golden Age section featured over 75 books, up from maybe five or ten from a couple months ago. But what is really interesting is the number of bids on these books. Almost every one had a substantial amount of bids, and most will sell. If you check out any other items on eBay, many times you'll find hundreds of listings with maybe a few sparse bids here and there. Comics are truly one of the most active sections of eBay.

Outside of the auction arena things are just

as strong, with Timely leading the pack. Many issues are selling over Guide, or at least selling briskly at Guide. No discounts here, folks! What's the explanation for this phenomenon, which has been going on for five years? Golden Age has morphed into a "cover" market over the last decade, and Timely has better covers than all the rest. My advice is either pony up the dough, or sit back and start up a run of Crack Comics.

I've been watching how slabbed books perform on eBay, and I've got to admit it's impressive. At the very least, these comics get a good number of bids, and at most they sell over Guide—even some "average" books. I think it's a subject of curiosity on people's part right now, but this could become the standard. Only time will tell.

There is also something brewing over in the Western section... I saw a Kid Colt #107 in VG sell for \$75—and Guide is \$5, and Rawhide Kid #17 in GD/VG sells for \$290. Guide? \$32. Just food for thought.

Recent Sales: Amazing Fantasy #15 FR- \$405; Batman #7 FR \$175; Detective #36 coverless \$210, #38 (restored) appFN \$2,000; Green Lantern #1 GD+ \$175; Marvel Mystery #2 coverless missing two outer wraps \$511; More Fun #44 PR (nbc) \$50; Showcase #4 GD \$1,100; #5 VG \$150; #6 GD \$243; #7 VG \$246; #8 FA/PR \$300; #9 FR+ \$350; #13 VG- \$500; Superman #2 (restored) appVF \$2000; WDC&S #10 GD/VG \$103.

..... ROBERT BEERBOHM COMIC ART

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Sales in old comic books have been very good in the first quarter. Lots of stuff is moving for me... if priced fairly. I am slowly moving into scarcer type stuff as my interest in "newer" material continues to wane after sloshing around in it for over 30 years. Anybody who thinks the comics market is weak doesn't know what they are talking about. After moving some 600+ lots through eBay, I have backed off that "bottom-feeder" flea market and do nothing but buy older material there.

Here are some sample sales: Adv. Into The Unknown #5 FN- \$130; Atomic War #1 FN+ \$300; Barney Google #2 GD/VG (De Beck Cupples & Leon) \$100; Barney Google sheet

music (De Beck) \$75; Batman #35 VG \$200; Bijou Funnies #2 (1st print, Crumb etc) FN+ \$100; Bringing Up Father Big Book #1 FN+ (scarce, McManus) \$700; Buster Crabbe #5 FN+ (Fraz./William.) \$375; Canteen Kate #2 VG- (Matt Baker) \$60; Car 54, Where Are You #2, 3, 4 NM \$350; Danger Trails #5 VG+ \$170; Detective #100 GD \$90; Fearless Fosdick (1st print, Capp) \$100; Felix the Cat BLB NM 1936; Fight 20 VG \$50.

Forbidden Worlds #1 VG+ \$275; Green Lama #6 VG+ \$100; Head Comix (1st print, Crumb) NM \$400; Humbug #1 VF Kurtzman \$125; Laughing Dragon of Oz BLB (scarce) NM \$475; Four Color #1285 (Leave It to Beaver) VF+ \$125; Little Nemo sheet music (McCay art, 1908) \$250; MAD #24 VF \$250 #25 VF \$150; Mickey Mouse Birthday Party sheet music (1936) \$35; Mickey Mouse #2 VG+ (David McKay) \$400.

Mystery Tales #15 VG+ \$55; Phantom #1 VF (GK) \$150; R. Crumb's Comics & Stories #1 (1st ed., w/out cover price) \$200; Silly Symphony BLB NM \$150; Snatch #1 FN (25¢ edition) \$200; Spirit Section 3/19/50 \$100, 5/20/51 \$85; Superman #26 VG+ \$250; Tortoise & the Hare #1 (1972) \$30; Thunda #1 VF- \$700; Yankee #1 VG- \$150; Yellow Dog #8-12 (1st print tabloids, Crumb) VF \$250 lot.

..... LEE HESTER • LEE'S COMICS INC.

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The Comics Guarantee LLC, or "CGC,"

is a new service where you can send your comics to get them graded and double-sealed in a plastic container or "slab." The present fees range from \$12.50 for a modern comic to \$40 for express service on a Golden Age book and the fees cover grading and the sealing only—shipping is extra. You will undoubtedly see slabbed comics floating around the upcoming conventions and on eBay, as dealers including yours truly, were given \$500 worth of free slabbing in order to kickstart the concept.

Sealed comic book slabs cannot be opened to check the book or look at the interior unless you break the two seals, rendering the grading certification null and void. But if you break the seals to enjoy the comic, you can return it to the company and have it resealed for another additional fee.

that the horror genre continues to lead the stampede these days. Collectors have unblinking zombie eyes when it comes to paying multiples of Guide for these books. Also moving nicely are issues of Creepy, Eerie, and Vampirella (anything from issues #1-10 move right out in all grades).

Speaking of the horror genre, don't miss this summer's American Association of Comicbook Collectors annual dinner in San Diego featuring "The Great EC Reunion." This year there's a display of rare original EC art and memorabilia, together with the always-anticipated art auction. This is a once in a lifetime event you do not want to miss!

Also on the horror scene... Metropolis Collectibles have unearthed a very nice group of horror books they're calling the Northford collection. I've personally seen a group of these and the cover gloss and richness of color is truly breathtaking. Time will tell (as it always does) on whether this is a pedigree or just a named collection. I am beginning to believe that pedigrees/named collections don't really matter anymore. Just as long as you can identify certain traits that can identify the book.

(Along those lines, anyone who has a Larson book with a solo "L" on the cover... this "L" stands for "liar." The Larson books had more than just the one letter on them. Anyone who questions their books authenticity should contact Lamont Larson expert Jon Berk. He'll set you straight.)

I recently received an email from a noted Mid-West collector on the subject of pedigrees. Here are a few excerpts: "Pedigrees vary in the price multiples paid for them (Mile Highs go for more than San Franciscos which go for more than Allentowns, etc.) so it's obvious that there is some sort of degree of 'pedigreeness' that the collecting community has accepted. There's no question a portion of the Northfords are of the same or better quality as books from other pedigree collections."

To answer the question there has to be an agreed definition of pedigree. I believe we invented pedigree because

the grading system we use is incapable of describing page quality, cover gloss (ink reflectivity), brightness, sharpness of corners, etc. This has meant that we have historically had difficulty factoring these variables into the grade in a consistent way. Some collectors pay extra for a pedigree because they want the qualities associated with that pedigree... usually a very high state of preservation of the original qualities of a comic book (while other pedigree purchasers usually do so for investment purposes). It's comforting to assume that all Mile Highs are of "pedigree quality" but it's not true. Some MH Fiction House books were ruined due to bad storage, other Mile Highs were bought secondhand by Edgar Church (the original accumulator of the collection) and are hardly exceptional. Some Bethlehems that were for sale in the last couple of years were very tired looking comics... many would never be considered "pedigree" quality.

Yet, we (as a hobby) define all the books in a collection with a broad brush because there's no authoritative body to say which books in a collection are/ aren't of "pedigree" quality or to assign unknown books as a pedigree. (And I'm NOT suggesting we set up such a body—it would be much too impractical AND controversial at this point.)

In the real world, if there are enough comics in a collection that are similar in quality to comics in other pedigree collections, then people will call it a pedigree. Pedigree, provenance, or named collection... who's to say? If you're lucky, you might find some of these rare books at this year's shows.

With "convention season" now upon us, be on the lookout for many dealers prowling the floors with fistfuls of dollars looking for those collections that are being liquidated by the Mom & Pop collector. Sales are brisk and dealers need to replenish their stores.

I especially hope that dealers will break out those mid-1970s (high grade only) Marvels... demand is strong.

Please stop by the AACC booth at the San Diego Con and say hello. ■

MARKET REPORTS

Plastic slabbing has been used successfully with baseball card and coin collecting, however after careful consideration, I believe that this new service will have a larger challenge making major inroads in the field of comic books. Unlike cards and coins, comics are enjoyed as much for their interiors as their exteriors. Also, the slab does not provide nearly the same level of protection that Chris Pedrin's "Fortress" product provides. Of course, I haven't been able to get my hands on a Fortress for over two years, so until Mr. Pedrin goes back into production, the slab may be the best alternative available.

I can see some good use for the grading service in a limited fashion: for selling expensive books via the Web. Imagine you want to auction an Amazing Fantasy #15 on eBay. Since it's widely known that eBay sellers tend to overgrade, no matter how tightly you grade the AF #15 bidders will assume it to be overgraded. However, if you get it graded by an "impartial" service like the CGC you may get higher bids because the public may trust the company's impartiality.

But that has limited appeal. If you are going to sell the book in person, at a convention for instance, I think the need for professional grading is not as great in most cases. After all, doing a transaction face-to-face, the buyer can inspect the book in the normal fashion. The danger is that if the book is double-sealed in a plastic slab, the comics cannot be touched or looked at in a proper manner. That may be a serious impediment to making a sale.

Besides sales via the Web, another area where the plastic slabbing service might be useful is with high grade books, like Mile Highs or Gaines file copies. With those rarities, double-sealed plastic slabs will keep human touch from marring the comics. Still, as I discovered, the plastics used in the slabs are optically inferior to Mylar and the bottom line is that slabbed comics do not look as bright and appealing.

THE BIG QUESTION IS: "How correct is the plastic slabbing company's grading?" To find out, with my \$500 dealers' credit I sent them 24 comics in November, 1999. In all, I sent 4 comics in each grade, Fair to Near Mint, carefully grading each myself before shipping them. In 17 years selling comics to collectors, I have graded hundreds of thousands of

comics. Well, the service is not a fast process, but three months later the comics were all sent back to me in plastic slabs, graded by the company.

In the list below, going from low grade books to high grade books, I list the comic as I graded it, along with Guide value at my grade. Then I list the service's grade for the same comic, along with Guide value at their grade. And then I list the price differential. All values rounded to the nearest dollar.

(NOTE: The numerical grading system adopted by the company does not match that used by the Overstreet Price Guide, except for in Near Mint. CGC Good = 2.0, Overstreet Good = 2.5, CGC Fine = 6.0, Overstreet Fine = 6.5, CGC Near Mint = 9.4, Overstreet Near Mint = 9.4 This discrepancy makes it difficult to price CGC graded books by Overstreet. I have tried my best to estimate values, nonetheless. Please forgive me if any errors have crept in.)

Amazing Spider-Man #17

My grade = Fair (\$24)
CGC grade = Fair/Good 1.5 (\$36).
Price differential = +\$12

Amazing Spider-Man #18

My grade = Fair (\$17)
CGC grade = Fair/Good 1.5 (\$25)
Price differential = +\$8

Crimes By Women #12

My grade = Fair (\$25)
CGC grade = G- 1.8 (\$40)
Price differential = +\$15

Fantastic Four #28

My grade = Fair (\$12)
CGC grade = G- 1.8 (\$20)
Price differential = +\$8

Amazing Spider-Man #27

My grade = Good (\$25)
CGC grade = VG/FN 5.0 (\$63)
Price differential = +\$38

Fairy Tale Parade #4

My grade = Good (\$35)
CGC grade = VG/FN 5.0 (\$87)
Price differential = +\$52

Supersnipe V1 #12

My grade = Good (\$39)
CGC grade = VG- 3.5 (\$59)
Price differential = +\$20

Voodoo #19

My grade = Good (\$25)
CGC grade = VG/FN 5.0 (\$63)
Price differential = +\$38

Combat Casey #6

My grade = Very Good (\$16)
CGC grade = VG/FN 5.0 (\$20)
Price differential = +\$4

Clyde Crashcup #1

My grade = Very Good (\$24)
CGC grade = F 6.0 (\$36)
Price differential = +\$12

Green Lantern #22

My grade = Very Good (\$22)
CGC grade = F 6.0 (\$33)
Price differential = +\$11

Iron Man #2

My grade = Very Good (\$22)
CGC grade = FN/VF 7.0 (\$52)
Price differential = +\$30

Atom #29

My grade = Fine (\$42)
CGC grade = VF 8.0 (\$91)
Price differential = +\$49

Green Lantern #44

My grade = Fine (\$21)
CGC grade = VF- 7.5 (\$40)
Price differential = +\$19

Konga #5

My grade = Fine (\$27)
CGC grade = F+ 6.5 (\$35)
Price differential = +\$8

Wild Bill Hickok Frontier Fighter #1

My grade = Fine (\$60)
CGC grade = VF- 7.5 (\$94)
Price differential = +\$34

All Top Comics #11

My grade = Very Fine (\$507)
CGC grade = VF+ 8.5 (\$568)
Price differential = +\$59

Lone Ranger #65

My grade = Very Fine (\$35)
CGC grade = NM- 9.2 (\$50)
Price differential = +\$15

Love Diary #5

My grade = Very Fine (\$21)
CGC grade = VF/NM 5.0 (\$25)
Price differential = +\$4

Movie Comics: Darby O'Gill And The Little People NN

My grade = Very Fine (\$29)
CGC grade = NM- 9.2 (\$40)
Price differential = +\$11

Detective Comics #476

My grade = Near Mint (\$25)
CGC grade = NM 9.4 (\$25)
Price differential = Same Price

Forever People #4

My grade = Near Mint (\$20)
CGC grade = NM- 9.2 (\$18)
Price differential = -\$2

Land Of The Giants #3

My grade = Near Mint (\$30)
CGC grade = NM 9.4 (\$30)
Price differential = Same Price

Mister Miracle #7

My grade = Near Mint (\$22)
CGC grade = NM/MT (\$24)
Price differential = +\$2

CONCLUSION: Out of the 24 books, 21 graded higher than my grades, 2 graded the same, and 1 graded lower. The first book on the list to grade the same or lower was a Near Mint 9.4. The Near Mints are very close because at the top, you can't go any higher. If you bought these comics from me they would have cost you \$1,125. If you bought them at CGC grades they would have set you back \$1,574, a 40% increase in price, but it would just about cover the cost of the slabbing!

I will admit, I'm a pretty tough grader. The people who buy from me don't seem to mind, but the people who sell to me often seem to think I'm too strict. If you think that my grading is too strict, then please come by my stores or see me in San Diego (booth 2000) and take advantage of me. I currently have one hundred thousand dollars worth of Golden and Silver Age comics for sale, all graded by the same standard as those above.

If you must buy CGC books, you are better off sticking to the higher grades. I would suggest 9.4, Near Mint or better. And, finally, nothing will take the place of the good advice that comes from establishing relationships with dealers you trust.

A final thought... just when I think that no one is paying attention, one sentence that I wrote in a previous issue inspired a letter writing campaign from outraged citizens! Don't forget to tell 'em that you were maligned in Comic Book Marketplace!

•••••
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CGC: In the belly of the beast or savior of the market? As those who know me realize, I have had reservations about CGC and the concept of a slabbed book/grading service from the beginning. This is primarily due to my observations and experience of what has happened in the slabbed coin market place.

From a collector and concerned dealer point of view, CGC must ensure that they are accurate (as far as possible in the somewhat subjective world of grading), consistent over time and unbiased. These are CGC's primary obligations to the collector comic community. Other issues outside the control of CGC include:

1. Disclosure of complete grading information by the seller of a comic. This includes all the CGC adjectives that assist in properly describing the comic, whether the grade is an apparent grade and any factors the owner of the comic knows about that were not included in the CGC description.

2. When selling via the Internet, where a scanned image is possible, the inclusion of the best quality scan, to assist the potential buyer in making an educated assessment of the comic, independent of the CGC grade. High quality scanned images are possible, even with the book contained within the CGC slab.

3. The informed purchaser, knowing both his and CGC's grading standards, and assuming the very important factor of CGC consistency over time, making a reasonable determination of the true worth of the comic book, regardless of the CGC slab factor and how that affects the comics desirability in the market place.

4. Whether the market, which is at least theoretically primarily composed of collectors, values CGC slatted books more than it values the equivalent book not in a CGC slab. For those who are not in favor of CGC, this is the easiest way to let that fact be known: Do not pay more for a CGC slab than you would for the book without the slab.

5. The enjoyability of a book in a CGC slab. Clearly, this is an area where a true collector is less likely to be satisfied leaving the book within the slab. Comics, unlike coins and cards, contain most of their material within the covers and thus, cannot be fully appreciated within a slab. There are probably more factors to be considered. As a collector who is confident in his grading ability, a CGC slab is not a positive when I decide to purchase a book. That I am not easily able to examine the book is the primary detriment.

As a dealer, CGC will probably be a positive factor for my business. Why? Perceived value placed on the CGC slab by the market place combined with my policy of disclosing both my original grade, prior to submitting the book to CGC, as well as the CGC grade. Thus, my customers will be able to immediately assess my grading vs. a known (and hopefully

consistent) standard: CGC.

I have submitted a small number of books to CGC so far, this was to gain an understanding of their current grading standards and how they compare to mine. Here are the results for the 12 books I have submitted:

Action #23 - My grade: GD- 1.75 (Overall solid lower grade copy, light yellowing, supple pages and cover, upper staple pull, partial lower staple pull, abrasion to right upper edge FC, some splitting of spine; 5/8" tear right edge page 23 (46)

Action #23 - CGC grade: VG- 3.5 (Cream to off-white pages)

Border Patrol #1 - My grade: VGF 5.0 (Creamy to off-white cover, creamy pages)

Border Patrol #1 - CGC grade: FN+ 6.5 (Cream to off-white pages)

Classics Illustrated Special Issue #147A - My grade: Sharp VF- 7.5 (Light yellowing to creamy cover, light yellowing pages, glossy, distributor "circle Y stamp FC)

Classics Illustrated Special Issue #147A - CGC grade: VF 8.0 (Cream to off-white pages)

Classics Illustrated Special Issue #165A - My grade: NM 9.4 (Light yellowing inside cover, creamy pages, "circle H" distributor mark front cover

Classics Illustrated Special Issue #165A - CGC grade: NM- 9.2 (Off-white pages)

Chilling Adventures in Sorcery #1 - My grade: VF 8.0 (Glossy sharp, white cvr & pgs)

Chilling Adventures in Sorcery #1 - CGC grade: VF+ 8.5 (Off-white to white pages)

Comics on Parade #39 - My grade: FN/VF 7.0 (White cover, creamy pages)

Comics on Parade #39 - CGC grade: VF- 7.5 (Cream to off-white pages)

Fightin' Five #28 (#1) - My grade: FN+ 6.5 (Glossy, creamy cover, light yellowing edges of pages, light foxing edges of cover and fingerprints in gloss)

Fightin' Five #28 (#1) - CGC grade: FVF 7.0 (Off-white pages)

MAD #1 - My grade: VG+ 4.5 (Clean, creamy paper, fresh color, 1/4" tear upper edge front cover, 3/8" tear bottom edge front cover, very light color flaking, "pre-chips" and a 1/8" x 1/4" chip right edge front cover

MAD #1 - CGC grade: FN- 5.5 (1/2" tear on first two pages, off-white pages)

Perfect Crime #7 - My grade: FVF 7.0 (Glossy choice NM but penciled A in logo Front cover, *triangular piece out upper left corner back cover cause net grade of FVF, creamy to white pages, white cover)

Perfect Crime #7 - CGC grade: FVF 7.0 (Off-white pages)

Target V7#6 - My grade: VF 8.0 (Sharp, creamy paper)

Target V7#6 - CGC grade: VF 8.0 (Rusted staple, off-white pages)

War Heroes #2 - My grade: VG 4.0 (Near-white cover, yellow pages, couple color flakes front cover)

War Heroes #2 - CGC grade: VG 4.0 (Cream to off-white pages)

War Heroes #7 - My grade: FN 6.0 (Creamy to off white paper)

War Heroes #7 - CGC grade: FVF 7.0 (Cream to off-white pages)

(For those who wish to view these books, to see for themselves... and see that quality scans can be made even within a CGC holder... go to this Web address: <http://www.quasar-comics.com/cgc/index.htm>)

What conclusions can be gathered from this small sample? I think CGC is consistent in their grading and overall, I grade stricter than CGC and provide more information in my descriptions, although their grades on these books are not off the mark in the whole of the marketplace. Thus, it appears that CGC clearly offers a valuable service to those persons who do not have confidence in their own grading ability.

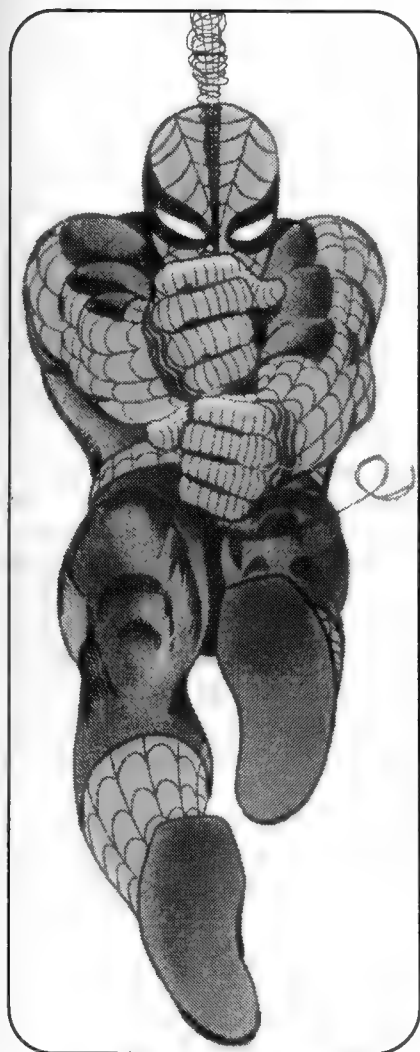
It is too soon to tell if CGC will be an overall positive or negative factor in the market but these recommendations should be kept in mind: Most importantly, learn to grade! CGC certainly sets a standard for those collectors and dealers that blatantly over grade such a practice will be harder to get away with. If CGC maintains consistency (I cannot stress this enough, consistency has not been maintained in the coin slab market over time, with grading standards becoming notably more lenient), they will certainly become a standard for individuals to measure themselves against.

A set of independent grading standards, set in stone, should be published as an ultimate measuring stick for the hobby to use, perhaps this will also encourage consistency of the part of CGC over time.

One final suggestion... buy the book, not the holder! 

Opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

I AM BUYING ALL PRE-1976 COMICS TOP PRICE PAID!



HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF MY
CURRENT BUYING PRICES:

AMAZING FANTASY #15, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #1
-ALL GRADES...70% OF GUIDE!

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #2-40
VF...60%, NM...70%

#41-100 VF...50% OF GUIDE, NM...60%
DAREDEVIL #1, FANTASTIC FOUR #1, HULK #1-6,
JIM #83, TOS #39, X-MEN #1
-ALL GRADES....70% OF GUIDE

FANTASTIC FOUR #2-28, X-MEN #2-15,
GIANT SIZE X-MEN #1
VERY FINE...60% OF GUIDE, N.MINT ...70%
MOST GOLDEN AGE SUPER-HERO TIMELY & DC
COMICS -ALL GRADES 70% OF GUIDE

MOST OTHER NICE GOLDEN/SILVER AGE DC,
ARCHIE, MAD, WARREN, DELL, BIG LITTLE BOOKS,
FAWCETT, CLASSICS, EC, CRIME, HORROR, MYS-
TERY, ROMANCE, SCI-FI, ETC.
-ALL GRADES...AT LEAST 50% OF GUIDE.

HI, I'M LEE HESTER, OWNER OF LEE'S COMICS IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. I AM LOOKING TO DRAMATICALLY EXPAND MY SELECTION OF OLD COMICS, BIG LITTLE BOOKS, AND PULPS. TO DO THIS I AM OFFERING RECORD PRICES! I BUY ENTIRE COLLECTIONS IN ALL GRADES, THE "GOOD" ALONG WITH THE "BAD". IF YOU ARE SELLING PRE-1976 COMICS, PULPS, OR BIG-LITTLE BOOKS, AND DESIRE FAIR, HONEST DEALING, AND FAST PAYMENT, PLEASE CONTACT ME. CALL ME AT MY PALO ALTO STORE BEFORE SENDING!

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WHEN IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, VISIT OUR STORES!

Andru & Esposito

Continued from page 25

So Gold as a character could almost be like Plastic Man. He could make himself minutely thin and stretch way across a bridge span for them to climb.

"Mercury was a hothead, like a thermometer. Tin was kind of timid. Iron was very powerful, and when mixed with Tin becomes unbeatable. There's lead, which protected them from Gamma rays and what have you. And of course little Tina, who fell in love with Doc Magnus because he messed up her responsometer. But I loved it."

Kanigher recalled that only ten days elapsed from concept to finished pages, a miraculous feat he attributes to Andru.

"Early Monday morning I called Ross Andru," Kanigher told *The Comics Journal* in 1983. "When he came in I handed him the 25 pages of finished script and 25 blank sheets of typewriter paper. I asked him to do a breakdown. One blank sheet for one page of script. The roughest of roughs. While I worked on my other books with writers and artists, Ross would come in with a page of breakdowns at a time. I wanted a different kind of layout. To suggest the transformation of the different metals. An entirely different kind of flow. Incredibly, Ross gave me what I wanted, made whatever changes were necessary. He was nothing short of brilliant. In several hours he was finished. He went home to do the complete job with Mike Esposito inking with great style."

Andru recalled designing the unique look of the Metal Men this way:

"First of all, I decided to come up with a common costume for all of them, and then modify it according to their bodies and temperament. In those days we always put a symbol on each superhero's chest, so I followed through and took the symbols that Bob suggested, which were the actual symbols for the metals. Then I thought about the different characteristics of each metal. It was sort of like taking different racial characteristics—and the metals have their racial characteristics, in a sense—and translating them to the character of the metal itself."

After four tryout issues, the Metal Men were awarded their own book. But in the transition, the grim tone and texture gave way to a lighter, more whimsical approach.

"What happened was at the time we did the first ones, it was a strong adventure book," says Esposito. "It was more science fiction. We weren't sure where we were going with it. But then Bob and Ross suddenly realized the humor in it, and we gave it a lighter touch. As Bob Kanigher became more satirical, automatically you can't have Clark Gable playing Lou Costello's role. You usually change the look to fit the script. Just like *Wonder Woman*. We gave her a lighter touch, even though Peter might have a style that was not artistically as up-to-date as the new artists, it was still fantastic. Ross and I, our stuff was much lighter, a little more fantastic, a little bit more syndicate-strip looking."

Once again, Esposito was the enthusiastic one, then as now. "I enjoyed the Metal Men," Andru allowed. "I have to admit that. But I'd say that about the first year or two I was more caught up in the novelty of the idea. As time wore on, the characters became predictable. It was one of the first *real* attempts at characterization—an incredible amount of characterization through the metals. I guess it got to where it couldn't go anywhere with those limitations. Not only that, but I found it painful to work with so many figures, very often in one panel. You had the problem of clarity, and maintaining visual interest."

After *Metal Men* had run their course, the team had a less satisfactory run replacing a promoted-to-publisher Carmine Infantino on *The Flash*. Infantino had been an immensely popular and Alley Award-winning artist on that book since its inception.

A&E could only look pale by comparison—a fact Andru freely admitted.

"I think I made several mistakes," he offered. "I was trying to incorporate the Marvel superhero look into the wrong character. He shouldn't have been that beefy, that muscular. I was trying to create exaggerated camera effects, and I overdid it. I look back on some of that stuff and I cringe."

Once again the call to self-publishing sounded. This time it was *Up Your Nose and Out Your Ear*. The year was 1970. Esposito recalls, "My wife said, 'You're out of your mind. What an ugly title. It's going to be a drug book and you're not going to get it on the stands.'"

"But it's not. It was Johnny Carson saying, 'May the bird of paradise fly up your nose.' And I thought, 'Why not?' The college kids are going to love this thing. They know that we mean this is a dissenter's book. They are against the politics, the prejudice, everything. And we want to say, 'Up your nose. We've had it.' Well, it died a miserable death. All the candy stores thought we were trying to push drugs, and it never got on the stands. If you can find it somewhere and pay \$15, buy it. Ross and I wrote it together. We pencilled and inked it. It was really a lot of fun."

After that fiasco, they hopped aboard the Marvel rocket ship, now at full speed. It was familiar territory for Esposito, who had worked for Stan Lee during the days Marvel was called Timely.

"I went there first only because Stan called me up and said, 'We are making a comeback.' We were with Timely Comics before, in the 1950s. We did *Annie Oakley*. We did a lot of stuff. When they went bankrupt as Atlas, DC distributed their books. They put a limit on how many books Goodman could publish for fear that he'd flood the market again like he did before. There were only two guys in town. DC was the only place to go. All the little guys were wiped out by the 3-D craze. All the Ray Hermans. All the Lev Gleasons. We had twenty companies now became one big company, and DC had a lock on it. As Marvel started selling, they broke away from the contract of being distributed and went on with Kable. They went on to distribute their own books and it caught on."

Esposito took the safe route, like DC artist Gene Colan before him. He inked John Buscema's Hulk under a pseudonym, Mickey Demeo. Nobody was fooled.

Esposito recalls how the DC editors had been puzzled by the upsurge of Marvel's sales in the early '60s.

"There was one period when Marvel Comics was doing so well, they were getting frightened by it," he relates. "They said, back in '63-64, 'Why is Marvel doing so well?' They are not drawing that well because they had guys using pen names, just hacking it out at a very low rate—like one-third the rate—and DC had all the top names of illustration. The answer was—and they didn't recognize it—it wasn't the drawing, it was the charisma. It was like Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy* outselling *Big Ben Bolt*. *Big Ben Bolt* was illustrated by a great illustrator, John Cullen Murphy, but it didn't have that *Joe Palooka* magic you see from Ham Fisher. What Marvel had with Ditko and those early guys was a certain charm. My daughter was reading *Spider-Man* one day and I said, 'What are you looking at that stuff for?' I was doing *Wonder Woman* then. She says, 'I like it, daddy, because he goes to high school and worries about his marks.' Stan put the human element in there. DC didn't recognize that. They were all saying that we had to draw better!"

Andru was slow to jump aboard the Marvel bandwagon, however. He did two issues of *The X-Men* before being replaced by Don Heck. A Spider-Man fill-in story was dumped into *Marvel Super-Heroes*.

"Ross didn't come back until years later, until around 1967," Esposito remembers. "He did a *Spider-Man*. . . I think it was inked by Bill Everett. It was a very early one. He did a powerful job on it. I don't think Stan understood at the time. It was loaded with visual concepts that the other guys

weren't doing. But later on when Ross took over *Spider-Man*, there was one book. I'm sure you know it—the tram over 59th Street Bridge with the Punisher and Nightcrawler.

It was a two-parter. My buddy Ross drove that thing back and forth with a Polaroid, taking pictures from every angle. I wouldn't go up that high. If you look at the shots, if you look at that story—nobody makes money on those stories. Ross never made money on those stories. He did it because he loved it. He's the kind of guy that would never do anything he'd be ashamed of... would never let something go that he wasn't positive was what he wanted. There are people like that. If I can find a shortcut, I'll take it. But when I'm with Ross, I can't. I've got to do it the way he wants it.

But that two-parter was unbelievable. Look at the *Superman/Spider-Man* book. You'll get dizzy looking at those panels."

Marvel was in full swing. In 1973, Andru was tapped to replace Gil Kane on their top title, *The Amazing Spider-Man*. Within a few issues, he pencilled a now-classic issue—the introduction of the Punisher in #129. Andru's *Spider-Man* run lasted to #185. Occasionally, Esposito would ink. Once in a while, he actually pencilled *Spider-Man*. The book he once scorned had become one he was proud to draw.

"Whoever thought that the country would be so hyped up about Spider-Man after seeing Superman and Batman and their hold on the public?" Esposito reflected. "Whoever thought Snoopy would ever beat out Mickey Mouse? It will happen, but not overnight. Something happens down the line. Frank Sinatra after Bing Crosby. Elvis Presley after Frank Sinatra. There's so many generations that have to go before a new excitement comes along. You can't force it. Six-year-old kids will come with a group one of these days that will knock out the Beatles."

When DC and Marvel decided in 1975 to co-produce their first crossover, *Superman Vs. the Amazing Spider-Man*, the plum assignment might have proven unassignable—except there was one artist who had pulled long stints on both superheroes: Ross Andru. "Ross had the ability to move a camera around like a movie director and solve problems," Esposito remarks. "He had a shot once in *Spider-Man* where Spider-Man had to fall from a fire escape on top of a bunch of garbage cans in an alleyway, and the cops are coming in the alleyway with the cars down at the other end—all in one picture. And he did it. He did it with the shape of an L. Here is a fire escape at an angle that you are looking down to the sidewalk, and Spider-Man is falling down towards it, and all the garbage cans are spread all over the place, and then it comes down and shoots over as the long shot going over to the cars as the cops are running towards you. Now, guys are *rare* that can do *that*."

"I just try to make my mind and eye and think like a camera," Andru explained. "Any optical effect that creates shock and surprise, I'm impressed by, and I try to incorporate it to the best of my ability if I can."

The man whom Andru replaced on *Spider-Man*, Gil Kane, once told *The Comics Journal*, "Ross Andru... was a *brilliant* composer, one of the best designers I ever saw in my life. He was totally underrated because nobody ever saw his pencils. All they ever saw were people inking him. I was such a fan that when I was doing *Spider-Man* covers over at Marvel during the '70's, and Ross was assigned *Spider-Man*, they used to give me his Xeroxed pages to use as a basis for inspiring the cover. I saved every one of those goddamn stories they gave me. I felt I had just found one of the most *gorgeous* samplings of great, professional comic drawing that was inspired by *understanding*! It dazzled me."

In time, Andru and Esposito went their separate ways. A versatile inker, Esposito wound up at Archie Comics, where he still works today. At this point in his career, he only inks. Pencilling no longer interests him.

"Take a character like Archie," says Esposito. "You get a guy like Stan Goldberg. The guy's a genius when it comes to costumes—girl's clothing, the hair styles, the shoes that the kids come up with. I say, 'Where do you come up with this?' Because I do Archie with him. He says, 'Penny Saver catalogue.' He's got it by his desk every day. If I were to draw Archie, he'd look like a kid from 1945, because I remember only those clothes. So you must, as a penciller, be responsible for all the airports, the latest cars, clothing hair styles, and it's a lot of work. So I chose to finish. I'm a little lazy, and I wanted to go to the race track and Atlantic City, and you can work at home. Ross is the kind of guy who'll sit there 24 hours—sometimes 26 if he gets up early—and he keeps working and working and working. I could never do that. He's still got his hair. I don't understand that!"

While at Archie, Esposito was drawn into the early Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles explosion.

"Oh my God, the Turtles!" Esposito says. "Let's all bow our heads. The Turtles saved the industry. It saved Archie. I remember when I was first offered a chance to draw the Turtles. Gary Brodsky, Sol Brodsky's son, called me up and he says, 'Mike, at twenty dollars a page I want you to do something for me. I just want you to do these drawings of these turtles over Rich Buckler. I said, 'What is it? I never heard of it.' It was a black and white manual on how they fight. No story, but it was the Turtles."

"He sold 30,000 comic books. Who would figure? You couldn't plan it. These guys couldn't get a job. Marvel wouldn't hire them. They did it themselves. They borrowed \$500, put out a B&W book and look what resulted: \$100,000,000! That's the hook I'm talking about. You can't conceive of why or how, and go about saying, 'Well, I'm going to plan something that goes in the sewer and then becomes a success.' You can't. You keep throwing seeds out on the lawn hoping that ten of them take out of 100 you throw. And if you keep doing it, one of them comes out a winner. It's like buying yearlings at auction: half of them are afraid of the starting gate."

Then Archie Comics reunited the ink-splashed duo in the early '90s on *Zen, the Intergalactic Ninja*.

"I love it. I really love it," Esposito enthuses. "When *Zen* came along, it renewed all my interest because I love the character. I love what it stands for. Again, charisma. First of all, it's Ross—teaming up again. The last thing we did together was the graphic novel, *Fear Itself*, and that was two years ago. Ross burned himself on that. Those shots are unbelievable. But this, he just does breakdowns for me. It releases some of the time for him that he doesn't have to spend finishing it off. And he loves it. He would never have taken this on if he didn't believe in that character."

"I'm enjoying this," Esposito noted at the time. "With Ross, it's more than just working with a guy. I grew up with him. There's a certain friendship and respect I have for his energy."

"The whole key, when you are a penciller, is to tell the story. Stan Lee recognized that. He said, 'I want pencils and I want finishes.' The reason being is that Stan gets more mileage out of the penciller by asking him to do three books a month rather than one book and taking a month to do it. So he gets John Buscema, who wants to ink badly... who *loves* to ink and tells him 'No, you don't ink. DeZuniga will ink your *Conan*. You're just going to pencil it.' I think that even if you just do breakdowns... be sure to tell the story."

When Ross Andru died on November 9, 1993, the magic of Andru and Esposito was stilled forever—that is if magic that has been committed to paper and ink and four colors can ever be extinguished. As long as comic books are collected, their work will be read and remembered.

What more could two high school friends turned partners-for-life expect? 

A LEAGUE OF HER OWN

by Gerard Waggett

After losing her Amazon powers, Diana Prince decided that she could no longer remain a member of the Justice League. In *JLA* #69 ("A Matter of Menace"), she resigned. "I'm no more than an ordinary mortal now," she told her teammates, which included not just Superman, Atom, and Flash... but ordinary mortals Batman and Green Arrow as well. "Much as I admire the Justice League," she continued, "I feel I no longer have a place in it." While Batman encouraged her to "feel free to return at any time," Superman deemed her "resignation not accepted." Instead he granted her a leave of absence.

It was more than a year after Wonder Woman regained her powers before DC finally addressed the subject of her returning to the Justice League. The character herself, still suffering from partial amnesia, had no recollection of ever resigning. "Then that explains why I haven't been summoned to any meetings lately," she told Superman during a chance encounter in *Wonder Woman* #212 ("The Man Who Mastered Women"). When, in that same issue, Superman invited her to rejoin, her memory gaps forced her to decline. "With my memory... my mind... in the state it's in," she explained, "I no longer deserve to belong." She worried that she would "forget [her] assignment during some life-and-death mission."

To prove to herself that she was indeed capable of being a full-time team member, she came up with a test that would provide a framework for the magazine's next two years. Taking a cue from the legend of Hercules, Wonder Woman insisted that she treat her next twelve adventures as a series of trials. If she could accomplish them successfully, then she would rejoin the League.

Each of those adventures was to be monitored by a member of the League, who would report back to the others. At this point in the '70s, team-up books had become quite popular. *Brave & Bold* had long since evolved from a showcase for DC's rising stars into a series of adventures featuring Batman and a guest star. For a time, Batman had been replaced as Superman's partner in *World's Finest* by a revolving lineup of guest-stars. *Marvel Team-Up* had been launched mainly as a

vehicle for the company's top hero, Spider-Man, to interact with other members of the Marvel Universe. While the Justice Leaguers were not supposed to help Wonder Woman out (they were supposed to monitor her in secrecy) they usually did play some role in the success of her trials. As such, from issue #212 through #222, *Wonder Woman* effectively became another DC team-up book. The Twelve Labors framework allowed the company the chance to boost circulation with a string of appearances by its most popular heroes (Superman, Batman, Flash, et cetera), each of whom would be featured prominently on the cover.

Editor Julius Schwartz must have realized that the guest narrative gimmick could prove tiresome. Writers were constantly finding new ways for each Leaguer to relay Wonder Woman's trials. Flash recorded "The War Machine" (*WW* #212) into a tape recorder while Green Lantern transcribed "Wish Upon a Star" (*WW* #213) straight into the JLA computer. Elongated Man videotaped "The World of Enslaved Women" (*WW* #219). In *WW* #215 ("Amazon Attack Against Atlantis"), Aquaman delivered his tale as eyewitness testimony during a JLA hearing against Ares, the god of war.

In *Wonder Woman* #217 ("The Day Time Broke Loose"), Green Arrow played the uncertain narrator, doubting his own memories after a run-in with the mind-confusing Duke of Deception. He recounted his entire narrative while hooked up to a lie detector. For those readers who missed the in-joke here, the story was

"fully dedicated to Doctor William Marston—alias Charles Moulton—the man with the dual distinction of having been the inventor of both Wonder Woman and the lie detector."

While Green Arrow doubted pieces of his report, his girlfriend Black Canary consciously omitted certain details from hers. "Paradise in Peril" (issue #216) revealed what would happen if a man ever set foot on Paradise Island: "Any Amazon seeing a man standing on [the] island will fall instantly in love with him—so much so that they will fight over him ruthlessly... violently"—a clear example of the inconsistent mythology which plagued the book for many years. No such catastrophe had taken place when I Ching traveled with Wonder Woman to Paradise Island

back in issue #183.

Issue #218 picked up the pace, packing two adventures together in one book. Red Tornado narrated "The Revolt of the Wonder Weapons" while the Phantom Stranger, an honorary Justice Leaguer, followed Wonder Woman's battle against longtime JLA nemesis Felix Faust in "Give Her Liberty or Give Her Death."

As Wonder Woman's trials neared their conclusion, Schwartz tossed his readers something of a curveball. Hawkman and Atom held a contest of their own to see who could find Wonder Woman's next adventure first. Atom appeared to win, watching Wonder Woman take on his old arch-enemy Chronos. Issue #220 ("The Man Who Wiped Out Time"), however, ended with a twist: Hawkman showed up, claiming to have witnessed a completely different Wonder Woman adventure which took place at the exact same time as her battle with Chronos.

That adventure, "The Fiend With the Face of Glass" (*WW* #121), resurrected Wonder Woman's arch-enemy Dr. Cyber, who had presumably died at the end of *Wonder Woman* #200. She had also presumably died at the end of *WW* #188. She "died" here as well, but before she did, readers finally got a good look at her face, which had been burned beyond repair in #187.

Batman showed up at the end of Hawkman's report, promising a solution to the mystery of the simultaneous adventures. Of course, DC would save its most popular character to narrate the final installment of this series-within-a-series. In *WW* #222 ("Will the Real Wonder Woman Please Drop Dead"), Batman explained that the Wonder Woman who battled Chronos was actually a robot.

Technically, that revelation should have voided Wonder Woman's tenth trial, but the Justice League had run out of members to monitor her adventures, and Julius Schwartz wisely realized that the storyline had run its course. Batman, whose wisdom was to be accepted as law by Justice Leaguers and readers alike, reasoned that "as an exact duplicate, [the robot] retained Diana's judgment... her skills, the very qualities we're testing." As such, the robot Wonder Woman's defeat of Chronos was to be counted as a victory for Wonder Woman herself. Of course, this line of logic violated the whole reason for the trials, namely Wonder Woman's need to test her memory during battle situations.

Schwartz obviously didn't worry that readers would complain too much about such particulars as long as they were given the ending for which they had been waiting almost two full years. In the last panel of #222, Wonder Woman was welcomed back to the League with a bouquet of roses.



Wonder Woman of the '60s

(Continued from page 33)

pushing the limits of acceptability, most notably with its provocative covers. #188 ("Cyber's Revenge") featured Diana with her hands chained above her head and the lower front of her dressed shredded. Eight covers later ("Target for Today?") found Diana manacled once again. This time, she was drawn from behind, and it was her blouse which had been torn apart, revealing a red bulls-eye painter on her back. Observant viewers would have noticed that she most definitely had not been wearing a bra. Such a cover cannot be described as anything but gratuitous. Nowhere in the story had Diana been restrained in any manner whatsoever.

Three issues later, the darkly shadowed cover of *Wonder Woman* #199 ("Tribunal of Fear") found Diana not only manacled yet again but on her knees as well. Adding a sado-masochistic overtone to the scene, behind her stood a bare-chested executioner, his head cloaked in a black hood. The very next cover (*WW* #200: "The Beauty Hater") chained Diana down yet again, this time to a makeshift operating table. The sado-masochistic edge was added by the presence of a masked Dr. Cyber brandishing a scalpel. Ironically, the two-part "Tribunal of Fear"/"Beauty Hater" storyline revolved around Cyber's plot to murder the publisher of an adult magazine.

Wonder Woman's sexually provocative covers certainly caught the attention of more than a few adolescent boys. While sex has always sold, the teasing covers here may have been designed as a necessary weapon to overcome the stigma of buying what could easily be perceived as a girls' comic book.

Stripping away *Wonder Woman's* powers presented DC with a far worse problem than stagnant sales and nasty letters to the editor. DC depended heavily during the '60s and early '70s upon licensing fees to keep the company solvent. Because of her wide recognition factor, the original *Wonder Woman* design had long been a popular image for selling lunchboxes, t-shirts, candy, et cetera. That image, however, was no longer being supported with an ongoing title. The *Wonder Woman* kids saw on news stands looked nothing like their Halloween costumes. *Wonder Woman's* new white-and-more-white image lacked a real marketing appeal—evidenced most clearly by book sales. According to *DC Comics*, "*The New Wonder Woman* didn't attract a big audience." As such, DC saw no reason not to bring back the *Wonder Woman* toymakers would pay to license.

The original *Wonder Woman* returned in issue #204 with little warning. Issue #203, the self-proclaimed "Women's Lib Issue," had ended mid-storyline. Diana and her women's lib group shut down Grandee's corrupt department store because the chauvinistic owner planned to pay his female help 25¢ below minimum wage. Their victory meeting was interrupted by a group of stick-wielding African American women, angry over the loss of jobs. The final panel ended with Diana asking, "What do you say to them now? And will we have time? They look like they mean business." That question was never answered. In the letter column, Denny O'Neil announced that he was leaving as editor and that Bob Kanigher (who had writ-

ten *Flash*, *Superman*, *Sergeant Rock*, and *The Justice League*) would be taking over. O'Neil added, "Bob will be doing a whole other thing."

Issue #204 ("The Second Life of the Original *Wonder Woman*") began with a sniper taking out the editor of a women's magazine—an appropriate choice of victim to signify the end of *Wonder Woman's* modern woman era. This may have also been a shot at Gloria Steinem, who had criticized DC's decision to rip away *Wonder Woman's* powers.

Just as Steve Trevor was sacrificed to move *Wonder Woman* into her new late '60s phase, I Ching was killed off by the sniper

Looking like a pinup page from *Betty & Veronica...* Diana Prince goes on a psychedelic shopping spree in issue #178 so she "won't stick out like a sore thumb at the Hippy Club"



in order to move Diana Prince back to her roots. While tangling with the gunman, Diana fell off a skyscraper and later awoke with a case of amnesia. Instinct drew her to Paradise Island, where her memory and powers were restored via an Amazonian memory bank. This sequence offered newcomers a quick history lesson.

As *Wonder Woman* would soon learn, her memory had not been restored in full. Major surprises awaited her. At this point, DC tried to stimulate sales by tackling controversial subject matter. Green Arrow had, for example, stumbled upon his sidekick Speedy's heroin addiction. *Wonder Woman* herself would soon discover not only that she had a long-lost sister but that her sister was black. As shocking as that twist must have been for its time, after watching *Wonder Woman* renounce her Amazon heritage, her readers had already learned that *anything* could happen to this character—or any other in the *Wonder Woman* universe.



The Silver Age Wonder Woman

(Continued from page 29)

would always preclude any deep romantic involvements. Thus, while even the readers were often asked for their opinion on the topic of “who does Wonder Woman really favor,” the point was moot. But it didn’t prevent the romance question from being the fodder for many a storyline.

This contradictory tone was in some ways a modern variation of “courtly love” as practiced in the medieval times, where an “unattainable” woman, usually married and of high social stature, would be an object of affection and attention from a man of lower social range, often younger. Such flattery, because it carried no expectations of sexual fulfillment, was not seen as threatening to a marriage and often expected of young aristocratic men coming of age.

Another overtone that was evident in the series was the objectification of Wonder Woman as a romantic object, in stark contrast to her statements about not becoming romantically involved. A story title such as “Wonder Woman, Battle Prize” sums up this overtone perfectly, as do the “sore arms” covers of issues #125 and 144, where Diana is literally being pulled in two (or more) directions by competing beaus. Still, when compared to the treatment given the likes of Lois Lane, Princess Diana’s day-to-day thoughts and feelings were not centered on a romantic obsession, and her proclivities could aptly be described as asexual.

Alas, as more than one writer has bemoaned, Steve Trevor was little more than a male Lois Lane. But in contrast to the *Lois Lane* stories, there was more emphasis on situations where Steve needed to be rescued by Wonder Woman, but less emphasis on the obsessive search for proof that Lt. Prince and Wonder Woman were the same person.

Mer-Boy likewise became, over time, equally prone to endangering himself. One wonders if the creators were finding themselves tired or bored with Diana’s exotic suitors, well before the “firings” depicted in #158, just by subtle shifts in reference points. For example, in “The Cave of Secret Creatures,” Mer-Boy’s people are portrayed as living in an open ocean-floor setting, specifically in a location guarded by a secret passage that only Wonder Girl knows about. By issue #120, they’re shown as living inside of a protected glass dome, which, in turn, seemed conspicuously absent in #140. By #147 however (“Bird-Girl—Fish-Girl!” July 1964), Mer-Boy’s people are shown as living in ridiculous-looking fishbowl houses! (Bubbling plastic castles would have been the *coup de grace*.) And Bird-Boy’s people didn’t fare much better in that same story, either, having to suffer the indignity of living in bird-cage houses in “Birdland,” high above the clouds.

In retrospect, the earlier appearances of Mer-Boy, and the Steve-Manno encounter in #118, were more enjoyable than some of the later outings on the same theme. The two stories in which Wonder Girl is transformed into a mermaid (#140 and 147) were whimsical

“what if situations,” even if the conclusion (regarding romance) was already foregone. Predictably, neither adventure works out for Wonder Girl or Mer-Boy. In #140, “The Human Lightning!” Mer-Boy can’t get a second alone with his heartthrob because everyone else, under the sea or on land, wants to be with the “Wonder Mermaid.” This amounted to retribution for Mer-Boy ignoring Wonder Girl when she visited him in “The Cave of Secret Creatures.” In “Bird-Girl—Fish-Girl!” it’s Wonder Girl who wants out after sampling some of that tantalizing undersea cuisine—raw fish, “frankfurters” and seaweed spaghetti!

Her visit to “Birdland” in the same issue also brings about gastric distress when she’s offered fresh-toasted worm pie by Bird-Boy’s mom, plus birdseed pizza! Both boys try to smooth things over with their parents and friends by saying “She’s only an Amazon,” a statement that only serves to aggravate Wonder Girl further. Yet both visits end on an upbeat note when her heroics save the day from threatening monsters.

Too young for romance, Wonder Tot nevertheless also had a male companion—Mr. Genie, a lovable, almost oafish giant sorcerer prone to be flustered and fearful without his magic turban (“The Human Lightning”). Mr. Genie’s role was strictly that of a playmate of Wonder Tot, but he enjoyed her company, and missed her miserably when she was away.

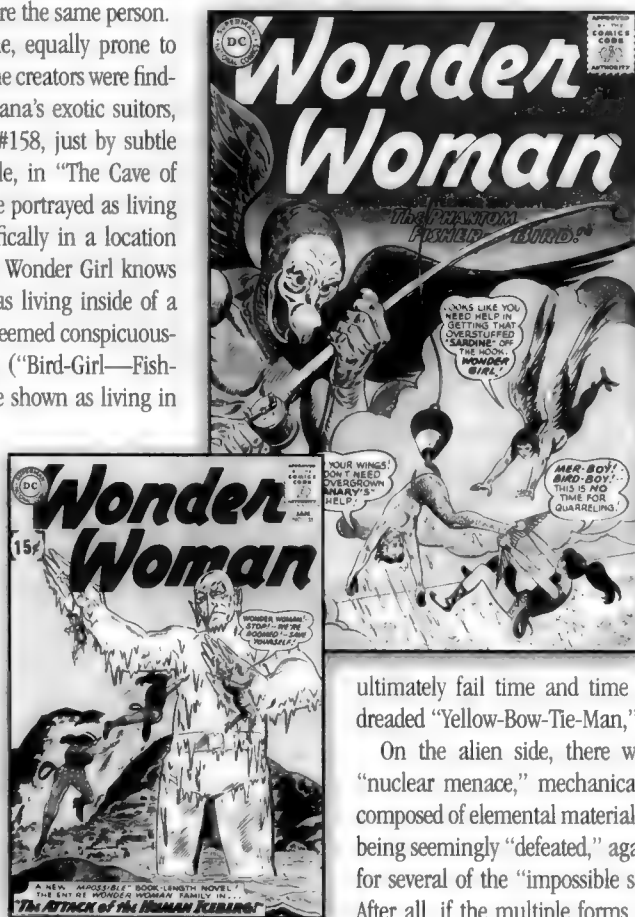
At the other end of the scale was (“Wonder”) Queen Hippolyta, who generally had no male companions or suitors. One key exception was when a statue she made of the “prince” of her dreams comes to life and sets foot on Paradise Island, setting off the destructive events in “The Last Days of the Amazons!” (#149, October 1964), in which everyone’s relationship with a male friend or companion was scrutinized under the combined gaze of Aphrodite and Athena—even that of Wonder Tot and Mr. Genie! One point underscoring “Last Days!” is the trouble that results when the goddesses are not worshipped in the proper manner and form!

Of Bad Guys and Birds

Several key recurring villains made their mark on the Wonder Woman tradition. One of the better-known human foes was the Angle-Man, an underworld schemer who has “a million angles” on how to capture Wonder Woman, although they

ultimately fail time and time again. Another human adversary was the dreaded “Yellow-Bow-Tie-Man,” who will be discussed later. . .

On the alien side, there was Multiple-Man, an all out, all-purpose “nuclear menace,” mechanical, methodical, and virtually indestructible, composed of elemental material, who would persistently reform himself after being seemingly “defeated,” again and again. Multiple-Man was the vehicle for several of the “impossible stories” featuring the entire Wonder Family. After all, if the multiple forms of Wonder Woman can get together for an



adventure, who better to challenge them than a "Multiple-Man"? And battle him they did, as radiation exposure was apparently no issue when dealing with this "Nuclear Menace."

Another persistent extraterrestrial pest was the Duke of Deception and his Martian Invasion Fleet (which sounds like a good name for a current swing-revival band), who generally gave the Amazons as a whole a difficult time in their many attempts to invade Earth.

Other villains seemed less endearing, such as the annoying Mouse-Man (Wonder Woman should have squished him when she had the chance). Then, in a class by himself, for total incredibility (if not insult), was Egg Fu—the immobile, giant, egg-shaped villain from Red China, with the living mustache and the grossly stereotyped dialect, about whom the words of creator Keith Giffen expressed it the best in the 1980s in the pages of *Ambush Bug*. The "Fu" would be done in by the compressive strength of the magic lasso (although his mustache would have been grist for a fantasy crossover confrontation up with Medusa of the Inhumans). The title would ultimately atone for the unfortunate ethnic stereotype with I Ching, but that's another article in this issue.

Missing from the action were the female adversaries of the Golden Age. While none might have had the misogynous attitude of Dr. Psycho, the foes of the Silver Age Wonder Woman were primarily, if not entirely, male. Blame this in part on the Comics Code, and conservative attitudes that worked hand-in-hand with it. As "bad girls" were featured in many crime comics and similar stories in the pre-Code days, the Code went to great lengths to try to encourage the depiction of female characters in the comics in socially acceptable role models.

As noted in Maurice Horn's *World Encyclopedia of Comics*, Dr. Fredric Wertham singled out *Wonder Woman* calling it "one of the most harmful" crime features on the market." The legacy of this criticism from the 1950s seems to have made the Silver Age creative team avoid "uppity women" as much as possible.

In many cases, Diana was faced with a threat not from some humanoid villain, but from the skies, in the form of a reptilian-shaped avian, specifically akin to a pterodactyl or an archaeopteryx. This ever-present "bird menace" came in all colors, one size (large) and often put a potential suitor in peril. Mer-Boy and Manno seemed especially targeted, although in "The Phantom Fisher-Bird" (#150, November 1964) Wonder Girl and Bird-Boy got trapped as well, and everyone had to be rescued by Wonder Woman. Perhaps the creative team had some ongoing phobia about birds, taken to the extreme on the cover of #152, a monster that resembles a land-dwelling dinosaur is referred to as an "Ice Bird!" It should be noted that the "bird menace" started to appear before the release of Alfred Hitchcock's film classic, *The Birds*, in 1963.

Humanoid villains generally had their lives spared, but menaces such as Multiple-Man were the objects of a concerted effort to destroy the threat once and for all. The alien invaders of the Duke of Deception's fleet were rarely, if ever, given quarter by Diana or the other Amazons. Many a countless "bird menace" met its demise after a good toss from the magic lasso, often in the briny deep of the ocean.

There was probably a lot more death and destruction implied in the adventures than the reader might casually notice, mainly because the frantic pacing of the stories and the artwork which did not invite the reader to dwell on this concern. And yet it seemed that birds, aliens, and

Wonder Woman and the JLA!

Wonder Woman fans who desired more maturely crafted adventures could contemplate at least two choices—write a strongly-worded letter of complaint to editor Kanigher... or buy the latest copy of the *Justice League of America*. As a charter member of the League, Wonder Woman's super-strength, speed, and invulnerability along with that all-purpose lasso made her an integral part of many team outings. Gardner Fox's scripts emphasized her essential strengths as opposed to the esoteric—no transglobal gliding on air currents here! When she needed to fly, Green Lantern could always whip up a pair of wings, as evidenced on pages 9-10 in "Riddle of the Runaway Room" (*Justice League* #31, November 1964). In this same issue, which also brought Hawkman aboard the League and featured the first appearance of "Super-Duper," Wonder Woman's ability to complement the powers of the other members was demonstrated in her super-speed vortex she created with the Flash.

There was no "special treatment" in the stories due to her gender, and Wonder Woman withstood the challenges facing her fellow Justice Leaguers with equal perseverance. The writing was especially intelligent and thought out, employing science fiction concepts that were more consistent with the science of the times. Artist Mike Sekowsky handled most of the series, joined by inkers Bernard Sachs and, later, Sid Greene. Sekowsky's stint on the title, ironically, would be followed by an assignment on Wonder Woman starting in #178. The Wonder Woman depicted in the *JLA* hinted at a Silver Age solo Wonder Woman that might have been....

And then there's that strange pseudomorph of WW, and of several other Justice Leaguers as well, the "machine-made menace" herself/himself/itself, "Super-Duper," conjured up by a "commonplace crook" in possession of an alien device that operates on thought-waves (*JLA* #31). Super-Duper was a composite of Flash's legs, Batman's torso, Hawkman's wings, Green Lantern's arms and power ring, and Wonder Woman's head... and of course, that lasso (with the tiara thrown in for no extra cost). During the resulting scuffle, Batman briefly pondered his chivalric code before smashing his fist on Super-Duper's jaw. T. O. Morrow revived this creature for his own ends in *JLA* #65 ("Tomorrow Kills the Justice League—Today!" September 1968) resulting in a rematch with Batman.

Oh by the way, Steve Trevor finally got to kiss his "angel"—at least once, for a life-reviving purpose, in the pages of the same *JLA* #65.

Readers who enjoyed Wonder Woman's exploits in this vein also had another option in the later 1960s, in the form of three issues of the *Brave & Bold*, featuring team-ups of Wonder Woman with Supergirl (#63, December 1965/January 1966) and with Batman (#78, June/July 1968, also featuring Batgirl) and #87 (December 1969/January 1970).

KANIGHER'S CLUBHOUSE?

Given the generally cheery tone of the letters and responses featured in "Wonder Woman's Clubhouse," the two critical missives sent from reader Robert J. Allen of New York in 1965 must have been a rude awakening. Equally revealing was the decision by Kanigher to print all/most of both letters in issues #158 and 159. Allen's was likely not the lone voice in the wilderness, just perhaps one of the more thoughtful and thorough. Note the editor's reference to changes in the series (by going back to the Golden Age norm) and being unaware of sales figures. Allen's play on Wonder Woman's attributes in the letter which appeared in #159 drew a humorous response from the otherwise dreaded "Yellow-Bow-Tie-Man."

From Wonder Woman #158:

Fans! Robert J. Allen of Attica, New York has sent me an extraordinary letter! It is in two parts! The first pans me flatter than a pizza! I don't have the space or time to refute it! Although I have a bag of eye-openers to present at some future date!

Mr. Allen's second letter asks for a revamping of *Wonder Woman*. I have already started putting into operation months ago many of the suggestions he has made. Such as taking the calculated risk of putting WW in an adventure deliberately *written* and *drawn* in the exact style of the "golden age" of comics, in the August issue of *Wonder Woman*, No. 156. It is a risk; because any "golden age" is a time which is already *well* in the *past*. I may be clobbered for it. But I had to take the chance. I'll let you all know the results. *Wonder Woman* has been active for about twenty years. She arouses violent emotional responses ranging from love to hate. She is never ignored. The Amazon gal *must* have something! But—to Mr. Allen's letter. It would be impossible to publish all of it without it taking at least three successive issues. So I will print what is most pertinent to the subject at hand—*Wonder Woman*. And leave out all the slings and arrows. Here it is:

Dear Mr. Kanigher:

This is being written about four days after the other letter but I'm including it all to let you know my whole feeling. Through my subscription I received the *August Wonder Woman* Number 156 and it was the *greatest* issue you've ever edited. I'm glad you've finally seen the light. With the continually falling circulation of *Wonder Woman's* childish adventures this issue is everything you've claimed it to be.

Although how many readers did you lose before you dared present this? I'd say that the circulation of *Wonder Woman* is at rock bottom but if you'll handle it right it'll soon make a rise, maybe to a million.

Although in the Golden Age it hit as high as 2,500,000 some issues. Now, with the 250,000 copies you probably had printed I think it will sell 99% of these, some places will run out. (Ed. note: I am fascinated by these figures; I've never been aware of them; I should have asked for a raise when WW was soaring so high; guess it's too late now—for now. To continue:)

...This issue (*Aug. WW*, No. 156) was one of the *best Wonder Woman* issues in years. I was waiting for my subscription to terminate with the January 1966. Whether I re-subscribe will depend on if you keep feeding us the golden age stories or not. These new *Wonder Woman* stories were aimed at children, and children (most of them under 7) can't follow a comic book regularly like a teenager who knows when it goes on sale, remembers it and looks for it. Children's minds aren't vast enough to follow it.

...Now to get to the issue. I compared it with the old *Wonder Woman* comics I have of the forties-early fifties (I have 3). The art was exactly the same, congratulations to your penciler and inker (Andru-Esposito). It was all you said it would be. The uniqueness of the story was that you utilized some of *Wonder Woman's* forgotten powers. I'd like the "new" *Wonder Woman* be the *old* again, same hair, adventures, shoes. Only *one* romance and that is with Col. Steve Trevor. I'd like to see Merboy, Merman, Birdboy, Birdman, eliminated from the stories. I'd like to see two 12 pg. *Wonder Woman*

stories per issue. (During the forties we had 3, 12 pgs. but now, with the smaller comics we can have two). I'd like to see the cover slogan (title, logo) written out as big as it was in the forties. It was so big then you could see it a mile away and you'd run to the stands to get it. (It's already done—watch for the new WW title with the latest issue—November *Wonder Woman* No. 158).

Although this story wasn't the top of the crop, that is by having the candy girls or the Holliday kids (Etta Candy and the Holliday Girls), whatever they are, acting like foolish children, the art was the best. I'd like to see you bring back the original power of the Golden Lasso, that of surrounding a person and making him obey the holder's commands. Also the bracelets forged together should be used more. What I couldn't figure out was when they stated that WW loses all her powers when they are forged together—how come she still could fly, kick ships with her feet etc.? I'd appreciate all the old powers explained since they haven't been used in years and my collection only goes back to 1960. I'd eliminate *Wonder Tot* and *Wonder Girl* PERMANENTLY....

Fans! I've changed my mind! Mr. Allen's letter has so mesmerized me that I'm going to introduce another "first"—a fan letter first! There's so much still to come which is of great controversy, that I'm going to continue his letter in the next issue! Meanwhile, in all fairness to the "other" side, a few voices:

From Wonder Woman #159:

Dear Fans: ROBERT ALLEN'S letter was so provocative, and seemed to represent an unofficial position of fandom on *WONDER WOMAN*, that I let him have his say in her last issue, *WONDER WOMAN* 158, Dec. And since it was so long and contained so many bristling points, I decided to let a fan have his two-parter, just as well as a fiction writer. So here's the second part of his letter:

I liked the *WONDER WOMAN* story in the August issue. I want to see this in every issue of WW. (Continued on page 75)

other non-humanoid fiends were dispatched without a second thought. However, it certainly wasn't hard to avoid shedding a tear over the demise of the likes of Egg Fu.

First Person, Personal

It was rather common for a story to open up with narration by Wonder Woman, or even Hippolyta ("Wonder Queen"). The first person narrative brought a more personable tone to the series and the aspect of eyewitness testimony. Wonder Woman also "spoke" directly to her readers in the "Wonder Woman's Clubhouse" letters column(s) with responses written allegedly by Diana herself. This in of itself was nothing new, as Wonder Woman had been "personally" answering questions since the days of *Sensation Comics*, although the topic discussed then was advice on love and romance.

A fair amount of letter column space was devoted to the news of the formation of new Fan Club chapters; while the balance consisted of questions ranging from the informed (Greek and Roman mythology) to the mundane (why can't Steve Trevor marry Wonder Woman/visit Paradise Island/get super-powers?). One young letter writer declared to Wonder Woman in issue #128 that "Steve Roper is the most handsome hero in comics, and I don't blame you for liking him!" (What's this? Evidence of a heretofore "secret" Silver Age crossover romance?)

The letters suggested the following demographic mix of readers—a general mix of younger elementary age girls, a smattering of male readers, most likely in the middle to upper elementary age group, and often young mothers as well, who would write of the enjoyment they had sharing these stories with their younger children. The fan club group depicted in "The Proving of Wonder Woman" may very well have been a pretty good attempt to visualize the series' young readership.

This personal approach to the reader was taken one step farther (at least with the ladies) in a contest in which a real-life female reader would get to visit Paradise Island, via being written into a storyline, as was done with Carol Sue in "The Attack of the Human Iceberg" #135 (January 1963). Page 5, panel 1 sums up the unique method of selecting a winner for this contest, as Lt. Prince, sitting in her office with entries piled on her desk and a fly buzzing about her head, states "Nothing could be fairer than to select the first letter that fly alights on—as the winner!"

Not content with this blending of the lines between fantasy and reality, the series managed to warp its own reality (and self-awareness) through the "impossible tales" featuring the entire Wonder Family. Never mind the actual physical questions of having three age-based phases of someone's life, occupying roughly the same general time-space coordinates, because it was all made possible through that clever Amazon video technology—just splice together films of Diana at three various stages of her life, as was done in #124 and voilà!

Other aspects of this self-awareness included "The End—or the Beginning!" in #158 (November 1965) where the entire cast of the series lit-

erally meet their "makers," especially the dreaded "Yellow-Bow-Tie-Man" (alias editor R. Kanigher), in a short but significant episode of serious "house-cleaning" that was necessary before the next chapter of the Silver Age Wonder Woman would begin. Wonder Girl at least survived this transition by joining a new group called the Teen Titans, although her first "makeover" came in the *Brave & Bold* #60 (June/July 1965), a few months before she was removed from the *Wonder Woman* continuity.

The Future... is in the Past!

During the first half of the 1960s it appeared as if times were flush, and fandom happily satisfied, if the tone of the printed letters in the "Clubhouse" were to be a measure. Yet there was a growing body of dissent, who saw the whimsy as silliness, the "family" adventures as wasted excursions, and the expanded base of supporting "romantic" characters as annoying distractions. Between the two divergent opinions on the series was an unassailable fact—sales were poor, and something different was needed!

As a response, editor Kanigher brought back the Golden Age style Wonder Woman in "The Brain Pirate of the Inner World," (#156, August 1965), which was the prelude to the "Retro Golden Age" period noted earlier. The story is unique for citing comic book collecting and the value of the old Golden Age books. When Wonder Woman visits the "Dream Merchant" book store and examines an old Golden Age issue, she finds herself transported back into the Golden Age, specifically re-living her battle with the transparent "Brain Pirates" of dimension "DM-X"

Around this time, a noteworthy critique of the series appeared from one Robert J. Allen of Attica, New York, who was bold enough to thoroughly analyze the series (and its creative team) in not one but two letters, printed in #158 and 159. Allen so thoroughly savaged on the Silver Age mythos as it had evolved to that point, that one wonders if "The

End—or the Beginning?" the back-up feature in #158 (November 1965) in which most of the supporting cast gets "killed" off (actually "retired") was written in response to the first part of this unabashed, scathing analysis.

Blurbs throughout the issues of the "Retro Golden Age" period (#156 included) proclaimed the pains and effort to which the essence, virtually everything from that period, was recreated, down to the Amazon mythos; the characters, the dialogue and the Peter-esque art by Andru and Esposito. Suddenly—it was all there, as older readers remembered—the power of the lasso, the curse of the bracelets; WW getting caught in her own lasso (the dominance, the submission!), those classic early "bad girls" like the powerful Cheetah, and of course, Dr. (or "Professor") Psycho, plus a somewhat cooler-headed Col. Trevor. Even the title's logo was changed to an arcing capital-block letter design, making a stronger visual statement vs. the previous mixed-case italic design (itself derived from the original Golden Age cursive-script logo). All that was missing



The Silver Age Wonder Woman

was the italic-Leroy lettering for the word balloons and captions.

One twist in this revisiting of the past was the changes to Paula Von Gunther, from her original Golden Age depiction, which, in *Sensation* #6, shows her as a German Baroness who is a spy for the Nazis, imprisoned in the US on espionage charges; she despises Wonder Woman for obvious ideological reasons. In *Wonder Woman* #163 (July 1966), it's Paula Von Gunta, debonair villainess, with no obvious involvement in espionage, and the German angle played down. After all, it was at the time (mid-'60s) that the Germans (at least the Western ones) were our allies in the Cold War. With the spy connection out of the way, Paula was just a lovesick, man-starved thief, with a gang of supportive zoot-suited cohorts. An opportunity was certainly missed here, for Ms. Von Gunta could have made an ideal communist spy, possibly from that former police state known as East Germany, which would have been appropriate for the beginning years of the Cold War and would have melded well with the "Golden Age" affectations.

More attention was paid to the original mythos of Wonder Woman's equipment. The old overtones of the lasso re-emerged, with Wonder Woman getting trapped in #159 and 163. The lore of the bracelets was emphasized, although there was at least one inconsistency, as follows: The bracelets were bonded together by the captain in "The Brain Pirate..." story, forcing her, according to the captain, to obey these other-dimensional antagonists, although she put up a pretty good fight throughout the story in spite of it. She also removed the bracelets under the hypnotic powers of the chain-smoking Ms. Von Gunta, unleashing a fury of explosive power. However, in the revised origin (#159), the transformation into "a creature of ungovernable fury" could take place if the bracelets were to be chained together by a man (not removed). What's interesting here is that the origin in *Sensation* #6 is silent on this aspect, only noting that all Amazons wear the bracelets as a constant reminder of their folly of "submitting to men's domination," and that Diana was given hers at the age of 15, pledging at Aphrodite's altar service to the goddess of love and beauty.

The End... of More New Beginnings!

Not everyone was pleased with the replica Golden Age product. Some fans' letters praised the scripts while panning the decision to recreate H.G. Peter's art style, which was seen as anachronistic. Others objected to resurrecting supporting characters such as the Holliday Girls, who, for instance, conveniently show up in #156 just in time to be captured by the Brain Pirates. (It would be another 20 years before Etta Candy finally got some respect as a realistic supporting character.) Fans of the previous six years' worth of mythos could not have been entirely pleased, either. Kanigher's bold "Journey into the Past" (apologies to Neil Young) would soon come to an end.

By *Wonder Woman* #170, the setting had reverted back to "current" time, and just eight issues later, the title would undergo the most radical change under new editor Denny O'Neil in #178 (October 1968). At least two highlights come to mind during this period—issue #170, where Wonder Woman is transformed into a gorilla, thanks to a mate-hungry alien ape, and issue #177



(August 1968) featuring a Wonder Woman-Supergirl collision, thanks to another mate-hungry schemer named Klamor (Diana and Kara had previously crossed paths in the *Brave & Bold* #63 (December 1965/January 1966).

O'Neil's revamping of the character resulted in an unrecognizable, non-super-powered Wonder Woman, trained in the martial arts by her spiritual advisor, I Ching. And Steve

Trevor was out of the picture, having been killed off in #179. It wouldn't be until late 1972 when the familiar trappings of the costume, the powers and the legacy of Paradise Island would return.

What a Woman!

The Silver Age *Wonder Woman* drifted from its roots for a few years in a wild, fun trip into an expanding fantasy universe, and then shifted gears several times, to a deliberate recreation of the Golden Age adventures, and then onto two successive but divergent "contemporary" versions. By the time *Wonder Woman* was returned to her superhero status and Amazonian heritage in 1973, the "Bronze" Age was already underway, and the title seemed to have regained its *raison d'être* in an updated, contemporary manner cognizant of the afterglow of the early days of the feminist movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Compared to titles that I was reading between the ages of six and twelve, and particularly the Supergirl stories in *Action*, the Silver Age *Wonder Woman* stories were noteworthy for the sheer sense of relentless action and business that the artwork alone conveyed! If there was one word I would use to describe the period between 1958 and 1966, it would be playful. The stories did not wallow in seriousness, rather there was a gleeful sense of adventure and a child-like sense of humor, and a sense of innocence, so lacking in much of the world today. Even the "Retro Golden Age" issues retained this intrinsic playfulness, after the outward "childish" trappings had been expunged.

If I had only been a little more adventuresome when I was younger, I might have become a diehard Andru-Esposito addict back then, instead of discovering their work on *Spider-Man* some years later. And I could have shared more fully the sense of joy that the woman at the copy shop displayed when she espied the covers—and possibly could have also sold her on a subscription to *Comic Book Marketplace!* 

CLUBHOUSE *Continued from page 72*

I can guarantee that when this issue goes on sale it'll be an instant sell-out because I'm going to buy a bunch of duplicates. Lots of others who follow the DC mags hate WW because she's so childish. But I think this issue will hook on quite a few more readers.

TO CLOSE HERE ARE MY SUGGESTIONS:

1. Before the end of the year, have a WW Annual, either by 80 Page Giant, or separate, and make all her stories pre-1950.
2. Keep the Golden Age art and stories, and make the covers Golden Age.
3. Get rid of Merman, boy, Birdman boy, Wonder girl etc. Just bring back the original WW without all these stupid things.
4. Make the stories more mature, and make Steve Trevor WW's only man and make her love him but still not marry him; keep up the suspense.
5. Re-arrange the Letter Column; make it new without acting like such a foolish baby. That way it'll attract all.
6. Give the much needed and long overdue Origin of WONDER WOMAN, as it was originally. Rewrite it in its original fashion with all things of the Golden Age included. IT'LL START A REVOLUTION!
7. Utilize all of WONDER WOMAN's original powers, weapons, etc. Bring it back entirely, make her act and talk like she did. (Keep up HOLA).
8. Tell the JLA editor to handle her this way too in this fashion.
9. Have two 12 pp. stories per issue, and a Novel occasionally.
10. Bring back EVERYTHING of The Golden Age on WW and see why it was so popular. Bring back the old WW slogan at the start of every issue. Stronger than Hercules, wiser than Mr. Kanigher etc. (OUCH!—I mean HOLA).
11. Most of all follow the original pattern, have original villains and WW will really re-live again. Keep her Golden Age costume to(o).

Thank you,

— Robert J. Allen, Attica, New York

Dear Robert: You certainly swing a saw-toothed ax. But as I said, I will print any letters no matter how critical that offer constructive criticism. I will try to answer your points one by one:

1. A WONDER WOMAN ANNUAL depends on reader action, as do all of DC's Annuals. I can only follow your lead. SGT. ROCK'S war annuals have been sensations, hence I'm on his third, which is something different. Instead of stories that have whipped up great reader response, this third Annual will be about outstanding characters. SGT. ROCK'S SIX BATTLE START! Count them! SGT. ROCK OF EASY CO. himself, ACE JOHNNY CLOUD, TANKMAN JEB STUART, GUNNER & SARGE, a BATTLE BONUS TALE, and bringing back that French TNT Tootsie, MLLIE. MARIE. It should be a blockbuster of an issue. If there's a demand for WW—a WW Annual there will be.

2. As I wrote Jerry Pritchett of the COMIC READER, the Jan. issue of WONDER WOMAN No. 159 will really put my head on the chopping block by making cover, story, art, all all all Golden Age! The fates preserve me! I'm turning the clock back to get ahead!

3. If you read the WW story called "The End or the Beginning"—a tale written especially about fandom's WW gripes, with real fans and their script barbs quoted, in WONDER WOMAN No. 158—you will discover the "killing" of the characters you mention: Merman boy, Birdman boy, Wonder Girl etc. For how long, once again depends on reader reaction.

4. Hurling WONDER WOMAN back to Golden Age will make Steve Trevor her one and only love—with surprises.

5. I have to accept full blame for how you feel about the Letter Column. It was *not* written by me, and it has *never* been written by me—but it is now.

6. WONDER WOMAN No. 159, Jan., contains exactly what you request: the true secret origin of WONDER WOMAN exactly as it was written and drawn in the Golden Age. A bombshell which hasn't exploded since its first blast during the Golden Age, about twenty years ago! The cover will knock you eye out. If it does-

n't—then I'll be in front of a firing squad.

7. The exact meaning and use of WONDER WOMAN'S Golden Age weapons are fully explained and used.

8. I'll tell Mr. Julius Schwartz of the JLA to follow suit, please. The two 12 pps. and the occasional novel will be attempted, but it really depends on the excitement of the stories; let's not be too rigid. But will try.

9. No 9—as I already answered Point 9 in Point 8. You'll have to be patient with me on this, I'm more interested in lightning bolts of ideas than turtle-like statistics. Sorree.

10. The original WONDER WOMAN slogan is being brought back (without "wiser than Mr. Kanigher!"—which I think is a funnier remark than many I've gritted my teeth over in pro scripts. Want to be a writer, Mr. Allen?

11. I don't know if it's really possible to go back in time in real life, and re-live the Golden Age. But I certainly am going to try. I'm putting all my chips down on the line with the first complete Golden Age WONDER WOMAN, starting with WW No. 159, Jan. Wish me luck. I'm going to try to find out if I can sail around the world without falling off: RK. ■

When he's not chasing after mermaids and kindred arcana and ephemera in comic books, author Myls Putman is a professional land-use planner/analyst (AICP) and technical writer. He also indulges his passions for local upstate-New York and medieval British history, drawing, gardening, and stone masonry. Myls resides with his wife and "tribe" of felines in Saugerties, New York.

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THE DC REGISTRY

(Continued from page 19)

Wonder Woman (1) #128-129, 133, 149, 154-155

Mer-Man III (variant):

Wonder Woman (1) #158

Mer-Mite:

Wonder Woman (1) #129, 145

Mister Genie (Genro; Earth-One):

Wonder Woman (1) #126, 130

Mister Genie (Earth-124):

Wonder Woman (1) #138, 140, 149

Paula (Earth-One; also see Villains entry for Baroness von Gunther: E2):

DC Comics Presents #76

The Legend of Wonder Woman #1, 3-4

The New Teen Titans (1) #11

Tales of the Teen Titans #50 (behind the scenes)

Teen Titans (1) #22

Wonder Woman (1) #99, 114, 123, 137, 174, 207, 210-211, 271 (behind the scenes), 289, 293, 299-300, 313-314, 316-317, 322, 324-329

World's Finest Comics #286

Steven Trevor (Earth-One):

The Brave & The Bold (1) #28

Justice League of America #7, 60, 65

Wonder Woman (1) #98-99, 101-116, 118-122, 124-127, 129-130, 132-134, 136-137, 139, 141, 148, 156-158, 166-169, 171-176, 178-180

Steve Trevor (Earth-124):

Wonder Woman (1) #124, 129, 149, 151, 154-155

Steve Trevor (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #50/1, 156, 159-165, 167/1, 168/1, 170/1

Diana Prince White (Earth-Two):

Sensation Comics (1) #1, 9

Wonder Woman (1) #236-237

Diana Prince (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #162, 167

Diana Prince White (Earth-One):

DC Special Series #19

Super Friends #1 (text)

GREATEST FOES: A SELECTED ROLL CALL

When he took over the *Wonder Woman* series, Bob Kanigher essentially abandoned the concept of recurring foes.

The prominent exceptions to this were William Moulton Marston's Duke of Deception (seen in ten stories between 1951 and 1957) and Kanigher's own Angle Man (appearing six times from 1954 to 1957). Both villains also surfaced several times during the Andru/Espósito era, both in Earth-One episodes and the offshoot continuities involving the Wonder Family and the Golden Age Wonder Woman.

Wonder Woman's general lack of a regular rogues' gallery made things challenging for Gardner Fox in *Justice League of America*, where the JLA occasionally fought groups of villains

taken from the members' solo series. Aside from Angle Man (*JLA* #14), Fox was forced into reviving one-shot villains like the Mask (unseen since 1947's *WW* #24) in *JLA* #35 and the more recent Professor Menace (cited later in this article).

On the other hand, the Multiple-Man threatened to become a fixture in the early "Impossible Tales" and Mouse Man made two appearances in 1963, returning late in Kanigher's run for a last bow in 1967. Egg Fu was blown to bits at the end of his introductory 1965 two-parter but that didn't stop Kanigher from using doubles like Doctor Yes (*Metal Men* #20, 1966) and Egg Fu, the Fifth.

The Paper-Man had been preceded by an earlier character with that name in *Tales of the Unexpected* #24. A second Mars appeared in *Blackhawk* #76 while Supergirl later encountered another Multiple-Man in *Action Comics* #330.

The clean-shaven Dream Merchant who propelled Wonder Woman into the pages of a Golden Age comic book in 1965 is almost certainly the same person as the goateed man who cast the Sea Devils into photographs three years earlier in a Bob Kanigher-Russ Heath effort. E. Nelson Bridwell later made a similar deduction about the Time Master, whom he linked with the Legion of Super-Heroes' Time Trapper in a 1978 *Super Friends* two-parter.

It wasn't until the short-lived Golden Age experiment of 1965-1966 that readers saw a major influx of repeat offenders in the book. Long absent foes like the Cheetah (last seen in 1948), Doctor Psycho (1946), Giganta (1948), and Mars (1951) took the stage again... joined by a remodelled Baroness von Gunther (now "von Gunta") and longtime favorite Angle Man.

Ironically, aside from Mars, most of the villains wouldn't be seen again until the next Golden Age revival, this one generated by the mid-1970s *Wonder Woman* TV series. This time, events in the comic were explicitly set on Earth-Two but concessions to the TV show resulted in some of the same continuity problems created by the sequence I've assigned to Earth-40.

Meanwhile, Angle Man, previously just a shrewd criminal genius, was revived as a full-fledged super-villain in 1977's *Secret Society of Super-Villains* #10 and *DC Special Series* #6,

Ross Andru and Mike Espósito, as seen in *Sea Devils* #13's "Secrets of 3 Sunken Ships" Joe Kubert appeared in part one and Gene Colan showed up in part two. Irv Novick and Jack Abel continued the self-portrait series in #14.



complete with a text page origin in the latter that involved Darkseid. Unseen since 1985, the Angle Man recently returned for a cameo in 1999's *Flash* #155.

Steve Englehart recalled the events of *Wonder Woman* #159-165 when he revived Minister Blizzard in 1976 as part of a cold-based team that also included Captain Cold and the Icicle. By 1981, though, when Roy Thomas introduced a brand-new Doctor Psycho, it was clear that the period was regarded as non-canonical.

The Cheetah, whose exploits on Earth-One went largely unrecorded, finally died late in 1980 and was replaced by her niece. The current *Wonder Woman* series includes a third Cheetah, unrelated in anything but name to the women who preceded her. Similarly, Mars is known as "Ares" in present continuity although 1991's *War of the Gods* briefly returned the Roman version of the god to prominence.

The final months of John Byrne's tenure on *Wonder Woman* in 1997 and 1998 reintroduced unlikely candidates Egg Fu (linked to Darkseid, like the earlier Angle Man) and Giganta.

Without further comment, here's a list of the major foes of the Kanigher/Andru/Esposito era, including Golden Age and modern appearances.



Amoeba Man:

Wonder Woman (1) #125

Angle Man (Earth-Two):

Wonder Woman (1) #70, 78, 81, 84, 92, 96

Angle Man (Angelo Bend; Earth-One):

Crisis On Infinite Earths #11

DC Special Series #6

Justice League of America #14

The Secret Society of Super-Villains #10

Who's Who '85 #1

Wonder Woman (1) #115, 128, 130, 141, 174, 242-243, 254, 272-273, 323

Angle Man (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #161, 164

Angle Man (Earth-32):

Wonder Woman: The Angle Menace

Angle Man (current):

The Flash (2) #155

Angle Man (variant):

Wonder Woman (1) #158

Baroness von Gunther (Paula Von Gunther; Earth-Two; also see Supporting Cast entry for Paula: E1):

All-Star Comics #28 (Paula)

Comic Cavalcade #16 (Paula)

DC Special #3 (Paula)

DC Special Series #9

Sensation (1) #4, 6-7, 12

Sensation Comics (1) #19, 21, 24, 27, 32, 50, 55, 101 (as Paula in all)

Wonder Woman (1) #1, 3-4

Wonder Woman (1) #5-7, 12, 16-17, 20-21, 34, 44 (as Paula in all)

Baroness von Gunta (Paula Von Gunta; Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #163, 168

Baroness von Gunther (Paula Von Gunther; current):

Adventure Comics 80-Page Giant #1 (as Dark Angel)

Wonder Woman (2) #131, 132-135 (as Dark Angel), 136

Baroness von Gunther (variant):

JLA #8-9

The Boiling Man:

Wonder Woman (1) #154

The Brain Pirate (Earth-40; also see King Lunar: E2):

Wonder Woman (1) #156

The Cheetah I (Priscilla Rich; Earth-Two):

Comic Cavalcade #11

Why did everyone in Merman and Lori Lemaris' Atlantis have fins and no one in Aquaman's kingdom? E. Nelson Bridwell explained it in 1977's *Super Friends* #9. Merman's Tritonis and Aquaman's Poseidonis had been sister cities, separated when Atlantis sank into the sea.

Crisis On Infinite Earths #5, 9

DC Special #3

Infinity, Inc. #22

Limited Collectors' Edition #C-39 (text)

Sensation Comics (1) #22

Who's Who '85 #4

Wonder Woman (1) #6, 28, 196, 230

The Cheetah I (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #160

The Cheetah I (Priscilla Rich; Earth-One):

Super Friends #1-2

Wonder Woman (1) #166, 274

The Cheetah I (Earth-32):

Wonder Woman: The Cheetah's Jewel Caper

Doctor Psycho (Earth-Two):

Comic Cavalcade #23 (mention)

Wonder Woman (1) #5, 18

World's Finest #248-249

Doctor Psycho (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #160, 163, 165, 168, 170

Doctor Psycho (Earth-One):

Crisis On Infinite Earths #9

Who's Who '85 #7

Wonder Woman (1) #288-290, 323

Doctor Psycho (current):

Legion of Super-Heroes (4) #89-90

Who's Who '91 #11

Wonder Woman (2) #51-53 (behind the scenes), 54-56, 59, 61 (mention), 65, 114

Doctor Psycho (variants):

Plastic Man Special #1

Sensation Comics (1) #36

The Dream Merchant:

Sea Devils #6

Wonder Woman (1) #156

The Duke of Deception (Earth-Two):

Comic Cavalcade #26

Sensation Comics (1) #92, 104

Wonder Woman (1) #2, 5, 34, 47, 63, 65-66, 81, 84, 88, 93-94, 239-240

The Duke of Deception (Earth-One):

Who's Who '85 #7

WW (1) #104, 148, 173, 217, 254

The Duke of Deception (Earth-124):

Wonder Woman (1) #140, 152-153

The Duke of Deception (variant):

Wonder Woman (1) #158

Egg Fu (Earth-One):

THE DC REGISTRY

Metal Men (1) #20 (mention)
Wonder Woman (1) #157-158

Egg Fu (current):

Wonder Woman (2) #128-129

Egg Fu (variant):

Ambush Bug #3

Egg Fu, the Fifth:

Wonder Woman (1) #166

The Fireworks Man:

Wonder Woman (1) #141

The Gadget-Maker:

Wonder Woman (1) #103

Giganta (Earth-Two):

Limited Collectors' Edition #C-45 (text)

Wonder Woman (1) #9, 28

Giganta (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #163, 168

Giganta (Earth-One):

Super Friends #30

Giganta (Doris Zeul; current):

Wonder Woman (2) #126-127, 136

The Glop:

Wonder Woman (1) #151

The Glop (variant):

Wonder Woman (1) #158

The Image-Maker:

Wonder Woman (1) #134

King Lunar (Earth-Two; also see

The Brain Pirate: E40):

Sensation Comics (1) #82

The Machine-Men:

Wonder Woman (1) #136

Mars I (Earth-Two):

DC Special Series #9

Sensation Comics (1) #92, 104

Wonder Woman (1) #1-2, 5, 34, 239-240

Mars I (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #159-160

Mars I (Earth-One):

Who's Who '86 #14

Wonder Woman (1) #169, 204, 206, 215, 250,
254, 259-261, 288, 290, 310

Mars I (current):

Jack Kirby's Fourth World #14

War of the Gods #1-4

Mars I (variant):

Adventure Comics #439

Prime Minister Blizzard (Earth-Two):

Wonder Woman (1) #29

Minister Blizzard (Earth-40):

Wonder Woman (1) #162

Minister Blizzard (Earth-One):

Justice League of Am. #139

Mouse Man:

Wonder Woman (1) #141, 143, 171

The Multiple Man (I) — The Nuclear Menace:

Wonder Woman (1) #124, 129, 135, 138

The Paper-Man II (Horace Throstle):

Wonder Woman (1) #165

Professor Andro:

Wonder Woman (1) #116

Professor Menace:

Justice League of America #5

Wonder Woman (1) #111

The Sinister Seer of Saturn:

Wonder Woman (1) #122

The Time Master (see The Time Trapper II):

Wonder Woman (1) #101

The Time Trapper II:

All-New Collectors' Edition #C-55

Legion of Super-Heroes (2) #280-282, 291

Legionnaires Three #1

Superboy (1) #223

Super Friends #17-18, 45-46

Wonder Woman (1) #101

Andru & Esposito Wonder Woman Reprints

#99: "Top Secret" — Reprinted in Greatest
1950's Stories Ever Told

#101: "Undersea Trap" — Four Star
Spectacular #3

#101: "Fun House of Time" — Wonder
Woman (1) #217

#103: "The Wonder Woman Album" — Four
Star Spectacular #6

#105: "Secret Origin of Wonder Woman" —
Secret Origins (1) #1; Secret Origins Replica
Edition

#105: "Wonder Woman, Amazon Teenager"
— Wonder Woman (1) #211

#106: "The Human Charm Bracelet" — DC
Special #19

#106: "Invisible Wonder Girl" — Wonder
Woman (1) #214

#107: "Gunslingers of Space" — Four Star
Spectacular #2

#108: "Wanted — Wonder Woman" —
Wonder Woman (1) #214

#111: "Battle of the Mermen" — Wonder
Woman (1) #199

#126: "Wonder Tot and Mister Genie" —
Wonder Woman (1) #211

#130: "The Mirage Mirrors" — Wonder
Woman (1) #211

#143: "The Terror Trees of Forbidden Island"
— Wonder Woman (1) #214

#144: "Revolt of Wonder Woman" —
Wonder Woman (1) #214

#144: "Mer-Boy Vs. Bird-Boy" — Teen Titans
Annual 1967 #1; Wonder Woman (1) #200
(pages 1-3 slightly redrawn to transform
Wonder Woman and Wonder Tot into ordi-
nary Amazons)

#170: "Wonder Woman — Gorilla" — DC
Special #16



An impossible family portrait.

ACG CHRONICLES

Continued from page 80

sorority she's always the PRUNE that's left over!")

A few one-shot showings from Batty Beatrice, Goofie Gertie, Daffy Doty, Dee Licious, Pepper, Luny Lucy, Buttons, Doris, and Agnes and Aggie (The Daffy Damsels) round off the cast.

There were also one-page written stories for those who actually wanted to read more adventures without the prominent and ever present "headlights" routinely drawn into the strips.

As I mentioned before, it's a wonder these ladies' heads didn't float off. That statement could be matched by saying it's amazing that some of these anatomically incorrect lasses didn't constantly fall over face first.

Now let's listen in on a few typical conversations. In the premiere issue a "man-in-the-street" reporter mistakenly asks Moronica what she thinks of America's tax structure. "It's beautiful!" she responds. "(It's) one of the prettiest buildings in Washington." The reporter, realizing what he's dealing with, tries to get her off camera. But Moronica, thinking she had just been a contestant on a quiz program, wants to know where her prize is. When it becomes apparent she's not getting one she starts crying. "BAW!!!" (gotta love it). "He won't give me my prize! I'm supposed to get a washing machine, or a radio, or the US Mint and HE WON'T GIMME MY PRIZE!" This, of course, attracts a crowd, resulting in a riot.

The two cops that show up (O'Riley and Flanagan) quickly determine that Moronica is somehow to blame and that all she really wants is her prize. "AND SO," as it

says, in the next panel she's walking down the sidewalk saying happily, "Golly! What a PEACHY PRIZE! A cute little gadget that goes 'click-click' AND a box of Cracker Jacks too!"

In the second issue a traffic cop pulls Goofie Gertie over. "I just saw you run through a red light back at that intersection," he says. "I RAN THROUGH A RED LIGHT?" exclaims Gertie. "Why that's SILLY! If I'd run through something it would have smashed my car!"

DD #3 features a Luny Lucy tale that starts off with Lucy's coherent friend, Agnes, asking what Lucy is putting on her eyes. "Vanishing cream," she replies. "I'm trying to get rid of the spots in front of my eyes." Agnes asks, "Holy cow Lucy! How can a gal as beautiful as you are be as STUPID as you are?" "It's EASY!" Lucy quips proudly.

In #4 Screwball Sal takes a shower while holding an umbrella so she won't "get soaked to the skin and catch pneumonia."

In the same issue we find Batty Beatrice hard at work as a counter clerk. A woman approaches and asks where she might find the hosiery. Beatrice informs her it's in the hardware section. "Just ask for garden supplies." The bewildered woman asks for clarification. Beatrice replies, "You want fur-

niture, you go to the furniture department. You want hosiery you go to the hose department. THAT figures doesn't it?"

Knothead Nancy begins her adventure in #5 by seeing a billboard ad that reads "Your Uncle Sam wants YOU!" Thinking the message is directed specifically at her she says, "Golly! I didn't even know I HAD an uncle!" Determined to find him she goes to the nearest recruiting office. After five pages of misunderstandings and twisted logic, involving a recruiting officer and a major, Nancy is hauled off to the "Plattville County Booby Hatch" in the back of a truck.

The Moronica story in the last issue includes a section where, standing outside on a fire escape, she strips to her underwear, thinking for some bizarre reason that she's in a dressing room. Her dress is carried off by the wind and she spends the next few panels climbing up the side of a brick building to retrieve it, much to the amusement of the crowd below. Don't people have nightmares about stuff like that?

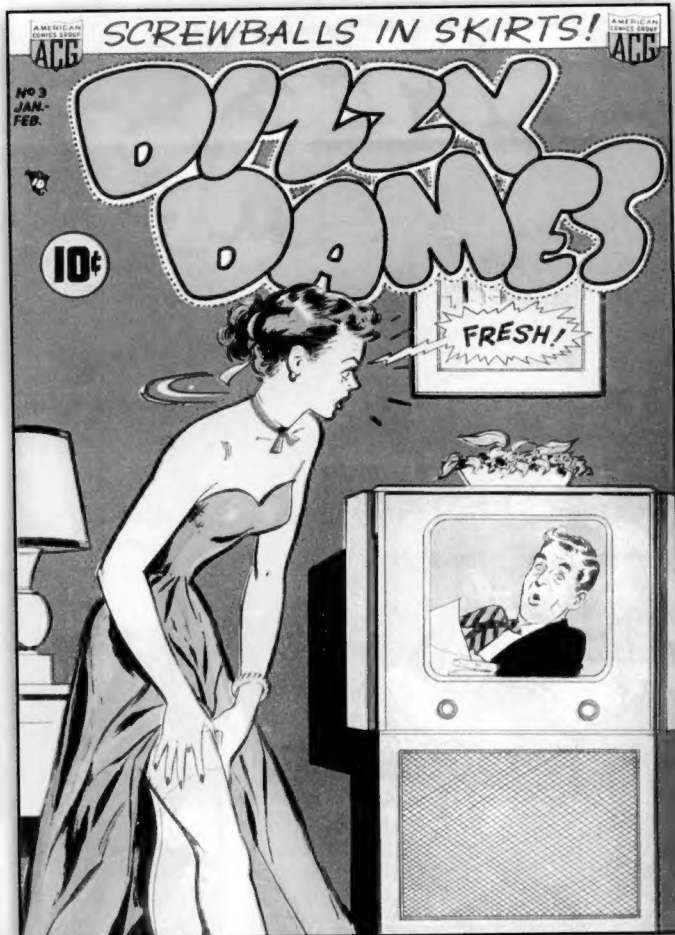
Anyway. Here's a little mystery. In 1997, Avalon Communications, based in Canada, published a *Dizzy Dames Special Edition*. The person I bought it from indicated it contained black and

white reprints from various issues in the series. Of course I bought it. The cover is almost an exact duplicate of the cover for #4 except for the price, and the art is cropped a little more. The only story I recognized at the time was Man-huntin' Minnie from #2. Since I didn't have #3 or 6 yet I assumed that the other three stories within would be in those issues. They weren't.

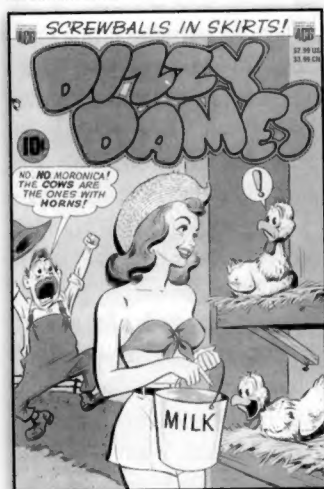
Screwball Sal and the Broadway Babes were there, and so was a newcomer "Starlet O'Hara in Hollywood," all in first run stories. The good girl artwork fits the series, but three of the four stories are new. Not that I'm complaining. It's like having *Dizzy Dames* #7. Still, what's up?

Directory assistance in Canada couldn't locate Avalon, there has been no response to the letter I sent to the address inside the cover, and ACG has been out of business since 1967.

Nonetheless, I'm a very happy collector, and consider myself lucky to own a set of this wacky and wonderful slice of politically incorrect pre-Code history. 



ALL COVERS & ART © ACG



Dizzy Dames!

BY KEVIN NAUGHTON

Somehow I knew as I approached my postal box that today would be the day. After almost eight years the search would be over. This time the money order would be cashed and not returned with a note saying something like, "Sorry, but we already sold that one."

At home I have pounds of paper representing hundreds of now useless catalogs accumulated over the years. I can't begin to tally the miles of convention floors and comic shops that have been futilely traversed, almost all so I could complete a six issue run of an early 1950's American Comic Group (ACG) title called *Dizzy Dames*. I put the key in the mailbox door and opened it. The only thing there was a pink slip of paper on which was printed "We have a package for you." Something too big to fit into the mailbox. Obviously not just another letter containing an apology. I located an employee and traded the slip of paper for a sturdily padded envelope and walked outside to my truck.

Once inside I opened the package and there they were... the double whammy... *Dizzy Dames* #3 and 6! FINALLY, I had in my hands the last two issues I needed to complete the set. Finding a single issue of ANY was quite an accomplishment, and here were my final two in one fell swoop.

Eight years before, when I first found issue #4 in a consignment box

at a local comic shop (San Diego Comics and Collectibles) I knew I had discovered something unusual. *Dizzy Dames* sure was an attention-grabbing title, but above that was a banner containing a sub-title that read "Screwballs in Skirts." What a zinger! How perfectly politically incorrect.

The woman on the cover was named Moronica. She was trying to coax milk from a chicken. "Oh my GOD!" I thought. "This is TERRIBLE! I MUST have it!"

After reading that fateful issue I decided to complete the set. After all, according the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* there were only five more. Simple.

Want to have some fun at your next convention? As you're making the rounds ask the dealers if they have any *Dizzy Dames* for sale. Keep track of how many give you a wild look and start foaming at the mouth as they say, "No, but if you find any duplicates look me up." Duplicates. Yeah, right. It seems that a lot of people know about these books but nobody dares mention the name.

So now, for the first time that I know of, a glimpse inside an ACG classic, those "Screwballs in Skirts," *Dizzy Dames*. To start with, this series is blatantly sexist, even for the times, which may have something to do with why it only ran six issues from September/October 1952 to July/August 1953.

I'd say that 90% of the females depicted here are, to use an expression, "dumb as dirt." Worse than any *I Love Lucy* routine, these gals have so much air in their heads it's a wonder they don't float off.

Editor Richard Hughes must have had a good time coming up with the story lines, and I don't mean this in a bad way, but I wonder if maybe he didn't take a little too much delight in the plot formations. It took some real thought to make these "dames" as brainless as they are.

There are several recurring characters. "The Broadway Babes" Dotty and Denise are trying to break into the "big time" in every issue. Of course they never make it. The adventures of the incredibly mindless Moronica (Miss Nit-Wit of 1952 and 1953 respectively) also made it to each issue.

Screwball Sal made a few appearances, as did Knothead Nellie (later to become Knothead Nancy) and "Man-Huntin' Minnie of Delta PU." ("Poor Minnie! When it's DATE night at the (Continued on page 79)



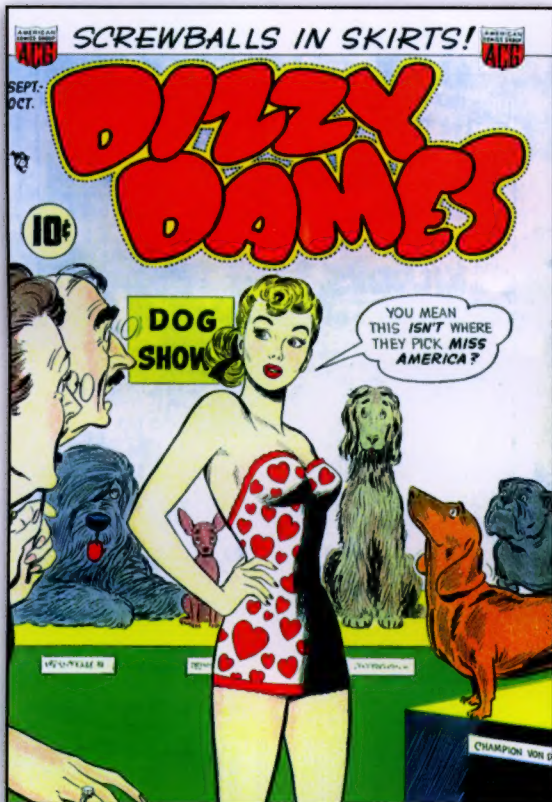
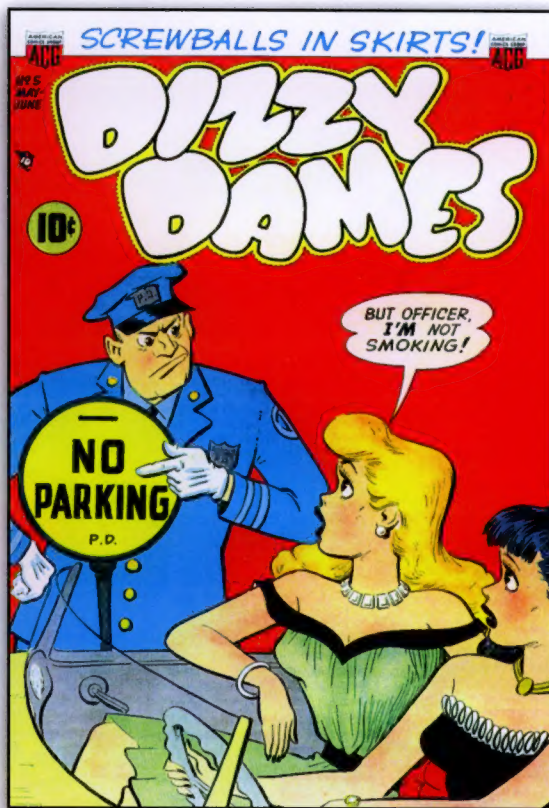
DIZZY DAMES VALUES

(GD, FN, NM values per Overstreet #29)

#1...\$11.00 ..\$32.00 ..\$80.00

#2....\$6.50 ..\$19.50 ..\$45.00

#3-6 .\$.5.70 ..\$17.00 ..\$35.00

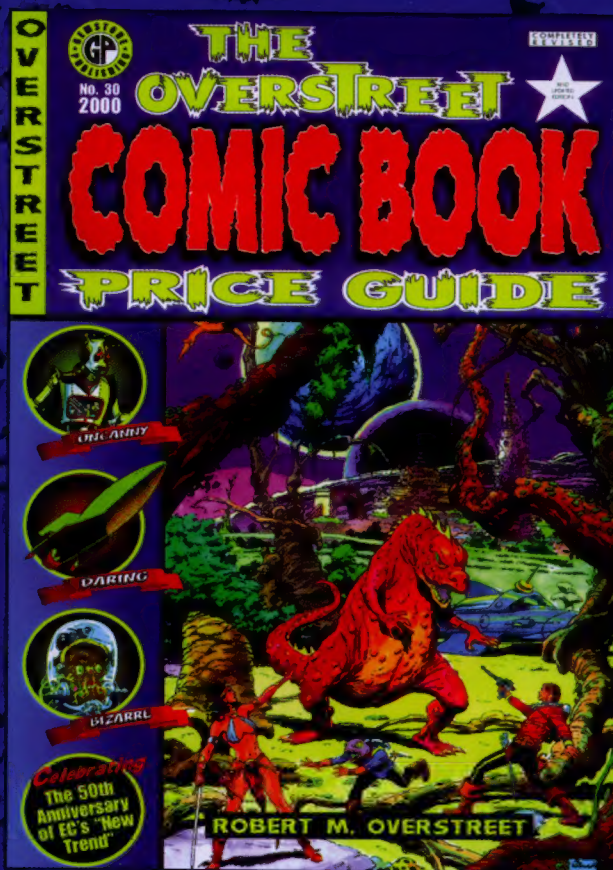
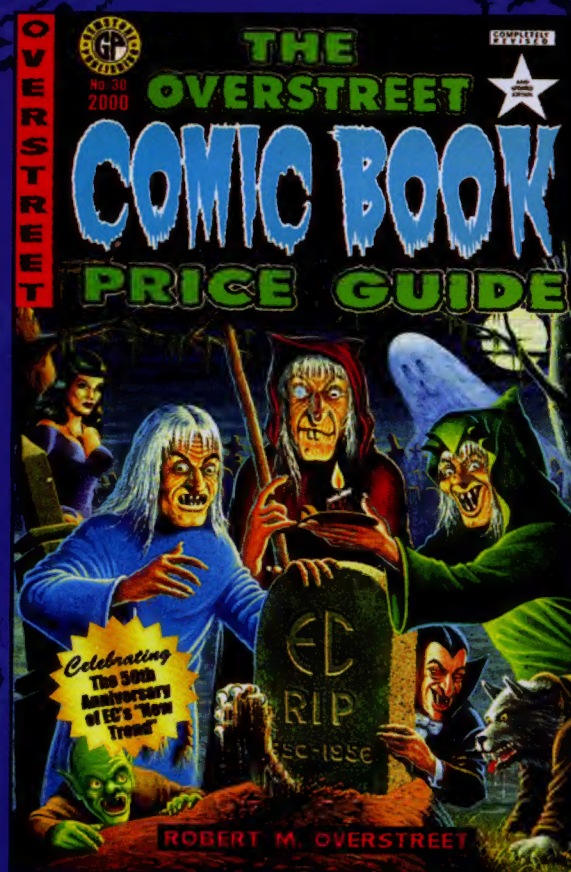


With only the first issue pictured in the Gerber Photo-Journal, Dizzy Dames #2-6 are rarely seen. Highly prized by both ACG and good-girl art collectors for their politically incorrect content, the six-issue run continues to escalate in both demand and value. Shown clockwise from upper left are Dizzy Dames #4 (Mar/Apr 1953), #5 (May/June 1953), #6 (Jul/Aug 1953, scarce), and #1 (Sep/Oct 1952)

FACING PAGE:
Dizzy Dames #2
(Nov/Dec 1952)

PAGE 79:
The Dizzy Dames Avalon "reprint" recycles the cover art originally published on issue #4 and Dizzy Dames #3 (Jan/Feb 1953) featuring an early television cover

DOUBLE TAKE!



Characters ©2000 William M. Gaines, Agent, Inc.

Did you know there were two covers for this book? EC greats **Al Williamson** and **Al Feldstein**, two comics legends, celebrate the 50th anniversary of EC's "New Trend" titles and the 30th anniversary of **The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide**! You can find them both at your local comic book shop in March!

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